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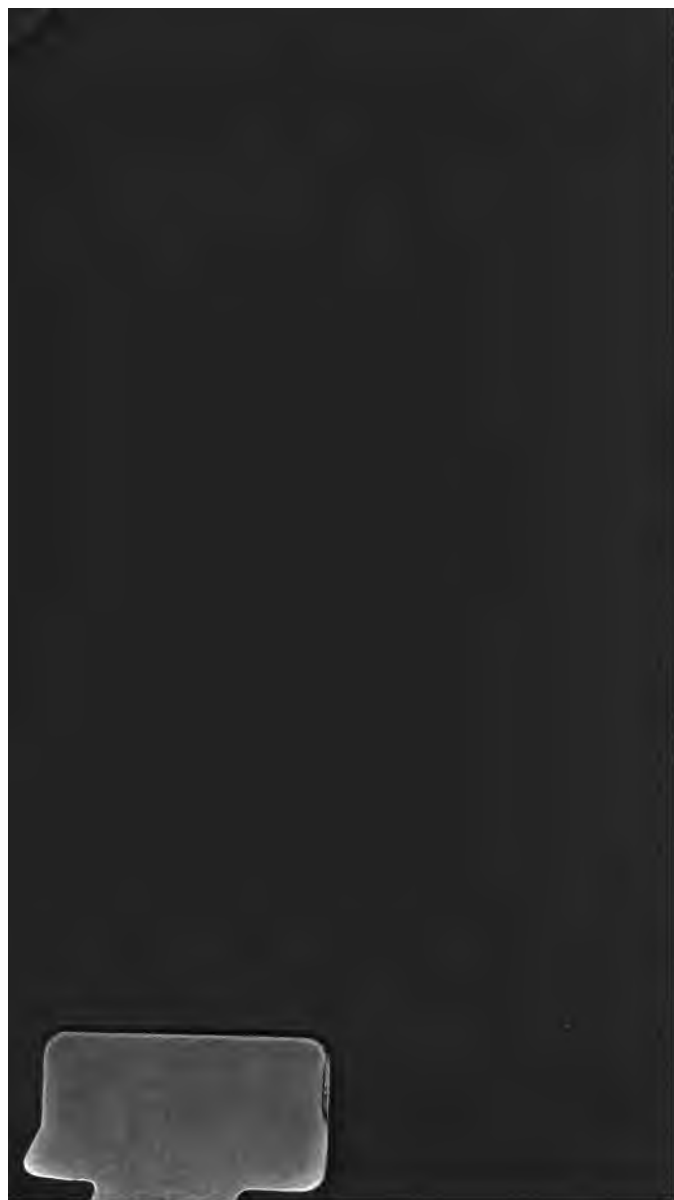
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INTERIOR OF HELMINGHAM CHURCH.

HOME TRUTHS



THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT.
WHICH IS THE WORD OF GOD.

EPH. CHAP. VI VSE. XVII.

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Home Truths.

BEING MISCELLANEOUS ADDRESSES AND TRACTS,

BY THE

REV. J. C. RYLE, B.A.,

Rector of Helmingham, Suffolk.

ARRANGED, REVISED, AND CORRECTED SPECIALLY
FOR THIS EDITION.

THIRD SERIES.

*"If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare
himself for the battle." (1 Cor. xiv. 8.)*

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“I have somewhat to say unto thee.”*

LUKE VII. 40.

READER,

I do not know who you are. I know not whether you are old or young, rich or poor, learned or unlearned. I only know that you are a child of Adam, and have a soul to be lost or saved. And therefore I say, “*Hear me ! I have somewhat to say unto thee !*”

Reader, I have four things to say, and they shall soon be said. The Lord make them words in season to your soul.

I. Firstly, I have a word of WISHES AND DESIRES for every one into whose hands these pages may fall.

I tell you it is my heart’s desire and prayer to God for you, that you may be saved. I want you to be convinced of your sinfulness in the sight of God, to feel your need of a Saviour, to know Christ by faith, and to have eternal life in Him.

* The substance of the following address was originally printed for private circulation as the author’s first ministerial address to the inhabitants of Helmingham.

I wish you to be one who knows his own lost condition by nature,—his own corruption, guilt, and danger of eternal ruin,—his need of a righteousness far better than his own, wherein to appear before God at the day of judgment.

I wish you to be one who actually applies to Christ for peace, and casts the burden of his soul upon Him,—who believes on Him for forgiveness,—who trusts Him for deliverance from all transgression, and forsaking all other hopes and confidence, draws from Him all his comfort and strength.

I wish you to be one who lives by faith, stands by faith, walks by faith,—who receives with the heart that grand truth, “He that believeth on Jesus is not condemned,” and rests securely upon it.

This faith is the only principle that produces inward peace and real holiness. This is the faith that sanctifies a man,—that purifies the heart,—that overcomes the world,—that works by love,—that brings forth fruit. He that hath this faith is born of God and an heir of glory. He that hath it not, is not of God, knows little of true vital Christianity now, and will be lost for ever hereafter.

Reader, my best desire is that you may be a new creature in Christ Jesus,—led by the Spirit of God,—conformed to your Master’s likeness, and not unto the world,—loving much, because much forgiven,—having communion with the Father and the Son,—one with Christ and Christ in you.

Then I should feel that you were *safe*;—safe, though the Lord should come in glory, and heaven and earth be

dissolved, and the elements melt with fervent heat,—safe, because ready for every condition. Judge for yourself, can I feel that for all who profess and call themselves Christians?

Then I should feel that you were truly *happy*;—happy, because the springs of your happiness would be in heaven, and never dry;—happy, because your peace would be that blessed peace which the world can neither give nor take away. Judge for yourself, can I feel that for all who profess and call themselves Christians?

Reader, I make no secret of my wishes, whatever you may think of them. God is my witness, these are my wishes, these are my desires for everybody.

II. Secondly, I have a word of **SORROWFUL WARNING** for some into whose hands these pages will fall.

Some of you know in your own hearts and consciences,—though I could say it weeping,—you know well, that you are not walking with God.

You, to whom I now speak, know well that God's ways are not your ways,—that although you profess and call yourselves Christians, your hearts are not right in His sight. You have no heart-felt hatred for sin. You have no heart-felt love for God's commandments. You have no delight in God's word. You have no pleasure in the company of His people. His day is a weariness to you. His service is a burthen. His ordinances are not precious to your soul. Your first and best thoughts are given to the life that now is,—you spend but the wreck and remnant of them on the life to come. Your treasure is on earth and not in heaven.

Your affections are set on things below, and not on things above. Your friendship is with the world, and not with God.

Oh! reader, what has the Lord God done to you that you should treat Him in this fashion? What can the world do for you, that you should love it better than Christ? Would the world die for you?—No! but Jesus did. Can the world put away your sins?—No! Jesus alone can. Does the world give true peace in this life?—No! but Jesus does. Will the world give comfort in death?—No! but Jesus will. Can the world help you in the day of judgment?—No! No! none can help you then but Christ!

Reader, what will you do when God riseth up, except you alter?—when He visiteth, what will you answer Him, except you change?

Do you not know that whatsoever a man soweth he shall also reap? He that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption:—He only that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life eternal. The world you think so much of now passeth away. He only that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

But God, our Saviour, still loves you. God is not willing that any one should perish. He sends you by my mouth a message of peace this day. Turn from the broad way and come unto Christ while there is yet time. Turn before the fountain is sealed, now open for sin and uncleanness;—before the Father's house is closed for ever and not one more allowed to enter;—before the Spirit and the Bride cease to invite. Be wise, repent, return, and come.

Reader, you cannot prevent my grieving over you, although you may be at ease yourself. God is my witness, this day I have given you a warning.

III. Thirdly, I have a word of QUICKENING AND STIRRING-UP for all true believers, into whose hands this tract may fall.

Believing reader, I trust I may say of you, you love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Know then that I want you to be a bright and shining light to those around you. I want you to be such a plain epistle of Christ, that all may read something of God on the face of your conversation. I want you so to live that all may see that you are one of the people of Jesus, and thus to glorify your Father which is in heaven.

Alas! I say it with shame, we many of us bring little glory to the Lord who bought us; we are far from walking worthy of our vocation. How weak is our faith! How fleeting our sorrow for sin! How faint our self-denial? How soon spent our patience! How thin and thread-bare our humility? How formal our prayers! How cold our love! We are called God's witnesses, but truly our witness is often little better than silence;—it is but an uncertain sound. We are called the light of the world, but we are,—many of us,—poor, glimmering sparks that can only just be seen. We are called the salt of the earth, but we scarcely do anything to make our Saviour felt and known. We are called pilgrims and strangers, but those who observe us might sometimes think this world was our only home. Often, too often, we prove to be

one thing in name, and another in reality;—high in our professions, but low in our practice;—giants in our resolutions, but infants in our actions;—angels and spiritual in our talking, heathen, or little better, in our doing;—goodly, like Naphtali, in our words,—unstable, like Reuben, in our works.

Oh! believing readers, these things ought not so to be. We must not be content with a low measure of holiness. We must not rest satisfied with a *little* sanctification. We must not think it is enough, because we have attained a small degree of grace, and are just one step better than the world. No! indeed, we must go forward from strength to strength. We must shine more and more unto the perfect day. We must strive to bear *much* fruit.

Christ did not give Himself to us that we should be a sleeping generation,—trees that grow not,—always standing still. He would have us be a peculiar people, zealous of good works,—valiant for the truth,—fervent in spirit,—living not unto ourselves, but unto Him. Freely saved, we should freely and willingly labour. Freely forgiven, we should freely and cheerfully work. Freely redeemed from more than Egyptian bondage, we should count it a pleasure and a privilege to serve the Lord. Our lives should be books of evidences. Our acts should tell out whose we are. “Ye are my friends,” saith Jesus, “if ye do whatsoever I command you.”

Brother or sister, what do you in the world? Where is the proof of your growth in grace? Are you awake, or are you asleep? Are there no tempers you might keep under more strictly? Is there no sort of besetting

sin you are shamefully sparing? Is there no time you might employ more usefully? Is there no kind of selfishness you are secretly indulging? Is there no good you have the means of doing, and leave undone? Are there no daily habits you might alter for the better? Are there no spots upon your spiritual garments which you never seek to have washed out? Are there no friends and relations you are letting alone in their sins? Oh! that you may deal more honestly with yourself than you have done hitherto! The Lord is at hand.

Brother or sister, look within. Take heed lest a deceitful heart, and an ensnaring world, and a busy devil, turn you out of the way. Study a tender conscience. Beware of indolence under the cloak of false humility. Make not the old Adam, and the devil, an excuse for little sins. Let the least things of your daily life be done well;—like the shekel of the sanctuary, let them be good measure,—let them be even more than full weight. Remember the Apostle's advice "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong." (1 Cor. xvi. 13.) They that follow the Lord fully are those that follow Him most comfortably. Be zealous though the world may sleep.

Brother or sister, I give you this word of quickening in love. I would not have you be the least in the kingdom of heaven. I would not like you to be the palest and dimmest amongst the stars in glory. I want you not only to be scarcely saved, and so as by fire, but to receive a full reward. Then lay these things well to heart.

IV. Fourthly, I have words of ADVICE for every one that desires to be a real Christian.

One part of my advice is this,—“*Search the Scriptures.*” They only are able to make you wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus. They are the truth of God. They must be fulfilled. They cannot be broken. And yet they are the book which many have, and very few read.

Reader, beware lest an unread Bible be an awful witness against you at the last day. If you would have your soul saved, read the Bible. If you would not be always wavering and carried about by every wind of doctrine, read the Bible. Read it regularly. Read it all. Be a Bible-reading Christian, whatever the world may say. Make time for this, whatever others may do. Remember my advice. *If you would not lose your own soul, read the Bible.*

Another piece of advice is this,—“*Pray without ceasing.*” Prayer is the only way by which man can approach God. Prayer is the only messenger we can send to tell God what we want; and if we would have good things for our souls, we must ask for them. Prayer opens the treasures of God’s mercies like a key; if we ask, we shall receive. Prayer is the means that every one can use if he will; and yet for all this many people never pray.

Reader, beware lest your neglect of prayer should prove your condemnation. If Jesus is to save you, you must pray. If your sins are to be forgiven, you must pray. If the Spirit is to dwell in your heart, you must pray. If you are to have strength against sin, you must

pray. If you are to dwell with God in heaven, your heart must talk with God upon earth by prayer.

Oh ! be not a prayerless Christian, whatever others may think 'right. Begin to pray this day if you never prayed before. Remember if you and I are to meet each other with joy at Christ's appearing, *you must pray*.

Another piece of advice is this,—“*Attend regularly on the means of grace.*” Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Go to some place of worship where the Gospel is preached. Faith cometh by hearing. Those who never hear are never likely to believe the Gospel.

Reader, beware lest you are ruined for ever by neglecting the means which God has appointed for your salvation. Alas ! it does not need to be a murderer, or an adulterer, or a thief, or a liar, in order to be in the way to hell. You have only to sit still, to do nothing, to profane the Sabbath, to refuse to listen to instruction, and in hell you will find yourself at last. Oh ! do not let this be your end. Draw nigh to God and He will draw nigh to you. Walk in the road where Jesus loves to walk, and who can tell but He will one day make you one of His believing people ?

Reader, I commend these things to your special notice. I know they are worth thinking over.

The Lord grant, if you never thought of them before, that you may go on thinking, thinking, thinking about them till your soul is saved.

The Lord grant, if you have thought of them, that you may think of them more and more every year you live.

The more you think of them the happier you will be.

I remain, your affectionate friend,

J. C. RYLE.

Shall You be Saved?

LUKE XIII. 23.

"Are there few that be saved?"

READER,

I do not know into whose hands these pages may fall. But I know there is no living soul, who ought not to feel an interest in their subject. Young men or maidens, old men or children, married or single, gentle or simple, listen to a solemn question; —*Shall you be saved?*

Reader, I take it for granted that you call yourself a Christian. You would not like to be reckoned a deist, or an infidel. You profess to believe the Bible, and all that it contains. The birth of Christ the Saviour,—the death of Christ the Saviour,—the salvation provided by Christ the Saviour,—all these are facts which you have probably never doubted. But, after all, will they profit you anything? Will they do you any good? In one word,—*shall you be saved?*

It may be you are young, healthy, and strong. Perhaps you never had a day's illness in your life, and scarcely know what it is to feel weakness and pain. You scheme and plan for future years, and feel as if death was far away, and out of sight. Yet, remember, death sometimes cuts off young men in the flower of their days. Your sun may go down before your life has reached its mid-day. Yet a little while, and you may be lying in that narrow, silent home, the grave. And then, consider,—*shall you be saved?*

It may be you are rich and prosperous in this world. You have money, and all that money can command. You have "honour, love, obedience, troops of friends." But remember, riches are not for ever. You cannot keep them longer than a few years. It is appointed unto men once to die, and after that the judgment. And then, consider,—*shall you be saved?*

It may be you are poor and needy. You have scarcely enough to provide food and raiment for yourself and family. You are often distressed for want of comforts, which you have no power to get. Like Lazarus, you seem to have evil things only, and not good. But perhaps you take comfort in the thought that there is an end of all this. There is a world to come, where poverty and want shall be unknown. But, consider a moment,—*shall you be saved?*

It may be you have a weak and sickly body. You hardly know what it is to be free from pain. You have so long parted company with health, that you have almost forgotten what it is like. You have often said in the morning, "would God it were evening,"—and in

the evening, "would God it were morning." There are days when you are tempted by very weariness to cry out with Jonah, "it is better to die than to live." But, remember, death is not all. There is something else beyond the grave. And then, consider,—*shall you be saved?*

Reader, I entreat you in all affection, to examine the question I put before you. I address you as a dying creature,—an immortal creature,—a creature going to be judged before the bar of God. As ever you would die in peace, rise again with hope, be acquitted in the day of judgment, and live for ever in glory,—give me a hearing this day. *Shall you be saved?*

If it were an easy thing to be saved, I would not address you as I do. But is it so? Let us see.

If the common opinion of the world, as to the number of the saved, was correct, I would not trouble you. But is it so? Let us see.

If God had never spoken plainly in the Bible about the number of the saved, I might well be silent. But is it so? Let us see.

If experience and facts left it doubtful whether many or few would be saved, I might hold my peace. But is it so? Let us see.

Come now, and let me set before you in order the four following points.

- I. Let me explain *what it is to be saved.*
- II. Let me point out *the mistakes which are common in the world about the number of the saved.*
- III. Let me show *what the Bible says about the number of the saved.*

IV. Let me bring forward some *plain facts, as to the number of the saved.*

Reader, if you go along with me in these four points, you will be better able to understand the importance of the question,—“Shall you be saved?”

I. *First of all let me explain what it is to be saved.*

This is a matter that must be cleared up. Till you know this, you cannot answer my question. By being “saved” I may mean one thing, and you may mean another. Let me tell you what I find the Bible says it is to be saved, and then there will be no misunderstanding.

To be saved, is not merely to profess and call yourself a Christian. You may have all the outward parts of Christianity, and yet be lost after all. You may be baptized into Christ’s Church,—go to Christ’s table,—have Christian knowledge,—be reckoned a Christian man,—and yet be a dead soul all your days;—and at last be found on Christ’s left hand, among the goats. No! reader, this is not salvation. Salvation is something far higher and deeper than this.

To be saved, is to be delivered in this present life from *the guilt of sin*, by faith in Jesus Christ, the Saviour. It is to be pardoned, justified, and freed from every charge of sin, by faith in Christ’s blood and mediation. Whosoever with his heart believes on the Lord Jesus is a saved soul. He shall not perish. He shall have eternal life. This is the first part of salvation, and the root of all the rest. But this is not all.

To be saved, is to be delivered in this present life from *the power of sin*, by being born again, and sanctified by Christ's Spirit. It is to be freed from the hateful dominion of sin, the world, and the devil, by having a new nature put in us by the Holy Ghost. Whosoever is thus renewed in the spirit of his mind, and converted, is a saved soul. He shall not perish. He shall enter into the kingdom of God. This is the second part of salvation. But this is not all.

To be saved, is to be delivered in the day of judgment, from all *the awful consequences of sin*. It is to be declared blameless, spotless, faultless, and complete in Christ, while others are found guilty, and condemned for ever. It is to hear those comfortable words,—“Come, ye blessed,” while others are hearing those fearful words,—“Depart, ye cursed.” It is to be owned and confessed by Christ, as one of His dear children and servants, while others are disowned and cast off for ever. It is to be pronounced free from the portion of the wicked,—the worm that never dies,—the fire that is not quenched,—the weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth, that never ends. It is to receive the reward prepared for the righteous,—the glorious body,—the kingdom that is incorruptible,—the crown that fadeth not away,—and the joy that is for evermore. This is *complete salvation*. This is the redemption, for which true Christians are bid to look and long. This is the heritage of all men and women, who believe and are born again. By faith they are saved already. In the eye of God, their final salvation is an absolutely certain thing. Their names are in the book of life.

Their mansions in heaven are prepared already. But still there is a fulness of redemption and salvation, which they do not attain to, while they are in the body. They are saved from the guilt and power of sin,—but not from the necessity of watching and praying against it. They are saved from the fear and love of the world,—but not from the necessity of daily fighting with it. They are saved from the service of the devil,—but they are not saved from being vexed by his temptations. But when Christ comes, the salvation of believers shall be complete. They possess it already in the bud. They shall see it then in the flower.

Such is salvation. It is to be saved from the guilt, power, and consequences of sin. It is to believe and be sanctified now, and to be delivered from the wrath of God in the last day. He that has the first part in the life that now is, shall undoubtedly have the second part in the life to come. Both parts of it hang together. What God hath joined together, let no man dare to put asunder. Let none dream he shall ever be saved at last, if he is not born again first. Let none doubt if he is born again here, that he shall assuredly be saved hereafter.

Reader, take notice, the chief object of a minister of the Gospel, is to set forward *the salvation of souls*. I lay it down as a certain fact, that he is no true minister, who does not feel this. Talk not of a man's orders! All may have been done correctly, and according to rule. He may wear a black coat, and be called a "reverend" man. But if the saving of souls is not the grand interest,—the ruling passion,—the absorbing thought

of his heart,—he is no true minister of the Gospel. He is an hireling, and not a shepherd. Congregations may have called him,—but he is not called by the Holy Ghost. Bishops may have ordained him,—but not Christ.

For what purpose do you suppose we ministers are sent forth? Is it merely to wear a surplice,—and read the services,—and preach a certain number of sermons? Is it merely to get a comfortable living, and be in a respectable profession? No! indeed! we are sent forth for other ends than these. We are sent to turn men from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. We are sent to persuade men to flee from the wrath to come. We are sent to draw men from the service of the world to the service of God,—to awaken the sleeping,—to arouse the careless,—and by all means to save some.

Think not that all is done, when we have set up regular services, and persuaded people to attend them. Think not that all is done, when full congregations are gathered, and the Lord's table is crowded, and the parish school is filled. We want to see manifest work of the Spirit among people,—an evident sense of sin,—a lively faith in Christ,—a decided change of heart,—a distinct separation from the world,—a holy walk with God. In one word, *we want to see souls saved*, and we are fools and impostors,—blind leaders of the blind,—if we rest satisfied with anything less.

Reader, take notice, that the grand object of having a religion, is *to be saved*. This is the great question that you have to settle with your conscience, and to which I

want you to attend. The matter is not, whether you go to church or chapel,—whether you go through certain forms and ceremonies,—whether you observe certain days, and perform a certain number of religious duties. The matter is, whether, after all, you will be saved. Without this, all your religious doings are weariness, and labour in vain.

Never, never be content with anything short of a saving religion. Surely to have a religion, which neither gives peace in life, nor hope in death, nor glory in the world to come, is childish folly.

And now, Reader, you have heard what salvation is. Consider calmly my question,—“SHALL YOU BE SAVED?”

- II. Let me, in the second place, *point out the mistakes, which are common in the world, about the number of the saved.*

I need not go far for evidence on this subject. I will speak of things which every man may see with his own eyes, and hear with his own ears.

I will try to show you, that there is a widespread delusion abroad about this matter, and that this very delusion is one of the greatest dangers to which your soul is exposed.

What then do men generally think about the spiritual state of others, *while they are alive?* What do they think of the souls of their relations, and friends, and neighbours, and acquaintances? Let us just see how that question can be answered.

They know that all around them are going to die,

and to be judged. They know that they have all souls to be lost or saved. And what, to all appearance, do they consider their end is likely to be?

Do they think those around them are in danger of hell? There is nothing whatever to show they think so. They eat and drink together. They laugh, and talk, and walk, and work together. They seldom, or never, speak to one another of God and eternity,—of heaven and of hell. I ask any one, who knows the world, as in the sight of God, is it not so?

Will they allow that anybody is wicked or ungodly? Never, hardly, whatever may be his way of life. He may be a breaker of the Sabbath. He may be a neglecter of the Bible. He may be utterly without evidences of true religion. No matter! His friends will often tell you, that he may not make so much profession as some, but that he has a "good heart" at the bottom, and is not a wicked man. I ask any one, who knows the world, as in God's sight, is it not so?

And what does all this prove? It proves, that men flatter themselves there is no great difficulty in getting to heaven. It proves plainly, that men are of opinion that most persons will be saved.

But what do men generally think about the spiritual state of others, *after they are dead*. Let us just see how this question can be answered.

Men allow, if they are not infidels, that all who die have gone to a state of happiness or of misery. And to which of these two states do they seem to think the greater part of persons go, when they leave this world?

I say, without fear of contradiction, that there is an

unhappily common fashion of speaking well of the condition of those who have departed. It matters little, apparently, how a man has lived. He may have given no signs of repentance, or faith in Christ. He may have been ignorant of the plan of salvation, set forth in the gospel. He may have shown no evidence whatever of conversion or sanctification. He may have lived and died like a creature without a soul. And yet, as soon as this man is dead, people will dare to say, he is "probably happier than ever he was in this life." They will tell you complacently, they "hope he is gone to a better world." They will shake their heads gravely, and say, they "hope he is in heaven." They will follow him to the grave without fear and trembling, and speak of his death afterwards, as "a blessed change for him." They may have disliked him, and thought him a bad man while he was alive. But the moment he is dead, they turn round in their opinions, and say, they "trust he is gone to heaven." I have no wish to hurt any one's feelings. I only ask any one, who knows the world,—is it not all true?

And what does it all prove? It just supplies one more awful proof, that men are determined to believe it is an easy business to get to heaven. Men will have it, that most persons are saved.

But again, what do men generally think of ministers who preach fully the doctrines of the New Testament? Let us just see how this question can be answered.

Send a man into a parish who shall declare all the counsel of God, and keep back nothing that is profitable. Let him be one who shall clearly proclaim justification

by faith,—regeneration by the Spirit,—and holiness of life. Let him be one, who shall draw the line distinctly between the converted and the unconverted, and give both to sinners and to saints their portion. Let him produce out of the New Testament a plain, unanswerable, unmistakeable description of the true Christian's character. Let him show that no man who does not possess that character, can have any reasonable hope of being saved. Let him press that description closely on the consciences of his hearers, and urge upon them repeatedly, that every soul who dies without that character will be lost. Let him do this, ably and affectionately, and, after all, what will the result be?

The result will be that, while some repent and are saved, the great majority of his hearers will not receive and believe his doctrine. They may not oppose him publicly. They may even esteem him, and respect him as an earnest, sincere, kind-hearted man. But they will go no further. He may show them the express words of Christ and His Apostles. He may quote text upon text, and passage upon passage. It will be to no purpose. The great majority of his hearers will think him "too strict," and "too close," and "too particular." They will say among themselves, that "the world is not so bad as the minister seems to think,"—and that "people cannot be so good as the minister wants them to be,"—and that "after all they hope they shall be all right at the last." I appeal to any minister of the Gospel, who has been any length of time in the ministry, whether I am not stating the truth. Are not these things so?

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And what does it all prove? It just makes one more proof that men, generally, are resolved to think that salvation is not a very hard business, and that, after all, most people will be saved.

But what solid reason can men show us for these common opinions? Upon what Scripture do they build this notion, that salvation is an easy business, and that most people will be saved? What revelation of God can they show us, to satisfy us that these opinions are sound and true?

They have none, literally none at all. They have not a text of Scripture, which fairly interpreted, supports their views. They have not a reason which will bear examination. They speak smooth things about one another's spiritual state, just because they do not like to allow there is danger. They cry peace, peace, over one another's graves, because they want it to be so, and would fain persuade themselves that so it is. Surely against such hollow, foundationless opinions as these, a minister of the Gospel may well protest.

Take notice, reader, that the world's opinion is worth nothing in matters of religion. About the price of an ox or an horse, or the value of labour,—about wages and work,—about money and corn,—about politics and trades,—about arts and sciences,—about books and pictures,—about all such things, the men of the world may give a correct opinion. But beware, if you love life, of being guided by man's judgment, in the things that concern salvation. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him." (1 Cor. ii. 14.)

Take notice, above all, that it never will do *to think as others do*, if you want to get to heaven. No doubt it is easy work to go with the crowd in religious matters. It will save you much trouble to swim with the tide. You will be spared much ridicule. You will be freed from much unpleasantness. But, remember, once for all, that the world's mistakes about salvation are many, and dangerous. Be very sure, that unless you are on your guard against them, you will never be saved.

And now, reader, I press my question once more on your attention,—SHALL YOU BE SAVED ?

III. Let me show you in the third place, *what the Bible says about the number of the saved*.

There is only one standard of truth and error, to which you and I ought to appeal. That standard is the Holy Scripture. Whatsoever is there written, you and I must receive and believe. Whatsoever cannot be proved by Scripture, you and I ought to refuse.

Reader, can you subscribe to this? If you cannot, there is little chance of your being moved by any tract of mine. If you can, give me your attention for a few moments, and I will tell you some solemn things.

Look then, for one thing, at one single text of Scripture, and examine it well. You will find it in Matthew vii. 13, 14 :—"Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat. Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." Now these are the words of our Lord Jesus Christ. They are the

words of Him, who was very God, and whose words shall never pass away. They are the words of Him, who knew what was in man,—who knew things to come, and things past,—who knew that He should judge all men at the last day. And what do those words mean? Are they words which no man can understand, without a knowledge of Hebrew or Greek? No! they are not. Are they a dark, unfulfilled prophecy? No! they are not. Are they a deep, mysterious saying, which no human intellect can fathom? No! they are not. The words are clear, plain, and unmistakeable. Ask any labouring man, who can read, and he will tell you so. There is only one meaning which can be attached to them. Their meaning is, that *many people will be lost, and few will be saved.*

Look, in the next place, at the whole history of mankind as respects religion, as you have it given in the Bible. Go through the whole four thousand years, over which the history of the Bible reaches. Show me, if you can, one single period of time, at which godly people were many, and ungodly people were few.

How was it in the days of Noah? The earth, we are told expressly, was “filled with violence.” The imagination of man’s heart was “only evil continually.” “All flesh had corrupted his way.” The loss of paradise was forgotten. The warnings of God, by Noah’s mouth, were despised. And, at length, when the flood came on the world, and drowned every living thing, there were but eight people who had faith enough to flee for refuge to the ark. And were there many saved in those days? Let any honest reader of the Bible give an answer to

that question. There can be no doubt what the answer must be.

How was it in the days of Abraham, and Isaac, and Lot? It is evident, that in the matter of religion, they stood very much alone. The family from which they were taken, was a family of idolaters. The nations among whom they lived, were sunk in gross darkness and sin. When Sodom and Gomorrah were burned, there were not five righteous people to be found in the four cities of the plain. When Abraham and Isaac desired to find wives for their sons, there was not a woman in the land where they sojourned, to whom they could wish to see them married. And were there many saved in those days? Let any honest reader of the Bible give an answer to that question. There can be no doubt what the answer must be.

How was it with Israel, in the days of the Judges? No one can read the book of Judges, and not be struck with the sad examples of man's corruption which it affords. Time after time we are told of the people forsaking God, and following idols. In spite of the plainest warnings, they joined affinity with the Canaanites, and learned their works. Time after time we read of their being oppressed by foreign kings, because of their sins, and then miraculously delivered. Time after time we read of the deliverance being forgotten, and of the people returning to their former sins, like the sow that is washed to her wallowing in the mire. And were there many saved in those days? Let any honest reader of the Bible give an answer to that question. There can be no doubt what the answer must be.

How was it with Israel in the days of the kings? From Saul, the first king, down to Zedekiah, the last king, their history is a melancholy account of backsliding, and declension, and idolatry,—with a few bright exceptional periods. Even under the best kings, there seems to have been a vast amount of unbelief and ungodliness, which only lay hid for a season, and burst out at the first favourable opportunity. Over and over again we find, that under the most zealous kings, “the high places were not taken away.” Mark how even David speaks of the state of things around him:—“Help, Lord, for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men.” (Psalm xii. 1.) Mark how Isaiah describes the condition of Judah and Jerusalem:—“The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot, even unto the crown of the head, there is no soundness in it.” “Except the Lord of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom, and should have been like unto Gomorrah.” (Isaiah i. 5—9.) Mark how Jeremiah describes his times:—“Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now and learn, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth, and I will pardon it.” (Jer. v. 1.) Mark how Ezekiel speaks of the men of his times:—“The word of the Lord came unto me, saying, Son of man, the house of Israel is to me become dross: all they are brass and tin and lead in the midst of the furnace: they are even the dross of silver.” (Ezek. xxii. 17, 18.) Mark what he says in the sixteenth and twenty-third

chapters of his prophecy, about the kingdoms of Judah and Israel. And where were many saved in those days? Let any honest reader of the Bible give an answer to that question. There can be no doubt what the answer must be.

How was it with the Jews, when our Lord Jesus Christ was on earth? The words of St. John are the best account of their spiritual state:—"He came unto his own, and his own received him not." (John i. 11.) He lived as no one born of woman had ever lived before,—a blameless, harmless, holy life. He went about doing good. He preached as no one ever preached before. Even the officers of his enemies confessed, "never man spake like this man." He did miracles to confirm His ministry; which, at first sight, we might have fancied would have convinced the most hardened. But notwithstanding all this, the vast majority of the Jews refused to believe Him. Follow our Lord in all His travels over Palestine, and you will always find the same story. Follow Him into the city, and follow Him into the wilderness. Follow Him to Capernaum and Nazareth, and follow Him to Jerusalem. Follow Him among Scribes and Pharisees, and follow Him among Sadducees and Herodians.—Every where, you will arrive at the same result. They were amazed:—they were silenced:—they were astonished:—they wondered:—but very few became disciples. The immense proportion of the nation would have none of His doctrine, and crowned all their wickedness by putting Him to death. And were there many saved in those days? Let any honest reader of the Bible give an

answer to that question. There can be no doubt what the answer must be.

How was it with the world in the days of the apostles? If ever there was a period when true religion flourished, it was then. Never did the Holy Ghost call into the fold of Christ so many souls in the same space of time. Never were there so many conversions, under the preaching of the Gospel, as when Paul and his fellow-labourers were the preachers. But still, it is plain from the Acts of the apostles, that true Christianity was "a way everywhere spoken against." It is evident that in every city, even in Jerusalem itself, true Christians were a small minority. We read of perils of all kinds which the apostles had to go through, —not only perils from without, but perils from within, —not only perils from the heathen, but perils from false brethren. We hardly read of a single city visited by Paul, where he was not in danger from open violence and persecution. We see plainly, by some of his epistles, that the professing churches were mixed bodies, in which there were many rotten members. We find him telling the Philippians a painful part of his experience: —"Many walk, of whom I tell you, even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is their shame, who mind earthly things." (Philip. iii. 18.) And were there many saved in those days? Let any honest reader of the Bible give an answer to that question. There can be no doubt what that answer must be.

And now, reader, I entreat you to weigh well the

lessons of the Bible which I have just brought forward. Believe me, they are weighty, and solemn, and deserve serious attention.

Think not to evade their force, by saying that the Bible only tells the story of the Jews. Think not to comfort yourself, by saying that, perhaps the Jews were more wicked than other nations, and that many people were probably saved among other nations, though few were saved among the Jews. You forget that this argument tells against you. You forget that the Jews had light and privileges, which the Gentiles had not, and with all their sins and faults, were probably the holiest and most moral nation upon earth. As to the state of people among the Assyrians, and Egyptians, and Greeks, and Romans, it is awful to think what it must have been. But of this we may be sure, that if many were ungodly among the Jews, the number was far greater among the Gentiles. If few were saved in the green tree, alas! how much fewer must have been saved in the dry.

Take notice, once for all, that the Bible and the men of the world speak very differently about the number of the saved. According to the Bible, few will be saved. According to the men of the world, few are going to hell. According to the Bible, few are going to heaven. According to the men of the world, salvation is an easy business. According to the Bible, the way is narrow, and the gate is strait. According to the men of the world, few will be found at last seeking admission into heaven, when too late. According to the Bible, many will be in that sad condition, and will

cry in vain, "Lord, Lord, open to us." Reader, the Bible was never wrong yet. The most unlikely and improbable prophecies about Tyre, Egypt, Babylon, and Nineveh, have all come true to the letter. And as in other matters, so it will be about the number of the saved. The Bible will prove quite right, and the men of the world quite wrong.

And now, Reader, consider once more my question ;
—SHALL YOU BE SAVED?

IV. *Let me show you, in the last place, some plain facts about the number of the saved.*

I ask the reader's particular attention to this part of the subject. I know well that people flatter themselves, that the world is far better and wiser than it was 1800 years ago. We have churches, and schools, and books. We have civilization, and liberty, and good laws. We have a far higher standard of morality in society, than that which once prevailed. We have the power of obtaining comforts and enjoyments, which our forefathers knew nothing of. Steam, and gas, and electricity, and chemistry, have effected wonders for us. All this is perfectly true. I see it, and am thankful. But all this does not diminish the importance of the question,—*are there few or many of us likely to be saved?*

I am thoroughly satisfied, that the importance of this question is painfully overlooked. I am satisfied that the views of most people about the quantity of unbelief and sin in the world, are utterly inadequate and incorrect. I am satisfied that very few people, whether

ministers or private Christians, at all realize how few there are in a way to be saved. I want to draw attention to the subject, and will therefore bring forward a few plain facts about it.

But where shall I go for these facts? I might easily turn to the millions of heathen, who in various parts of the world are worshipping they know not what. But I shall not do so. I might easily turn to the millions of Mahometans who honour the Koran more than the Bible, and the false Prophet of Mecca more than Christ. But I shall not do so. I might easily turn to the millions of Roman Catholics who are making the Word of God of none effect by their traditions. But I shall not do so. I shall look nearer home. I shall draw my facts from the land in which I live, and then ask every honest reader, whether it be not strictly true that *few are saved*.

Reader, I invite you to imagine yourself in any parish in Protestant England or Scotland at this day. Choose which you please, a town parish, or a country parish,—a great parish, or a small. Let us take our New Testaments in our hands. Let us sift the Christianity of the inhabitants of this parish, family by family, and man by man. Let us put on one side any one, who does not possess the New Testament evidence of being a true Christian. Let us deal honestly and fairly in the investigation, and not allow any one to be a true Christian, who does not come up to the New Testament standard of faith and practice. Let us count every man a saved soul in whom we see something of Christ,—some evidence of true repentance,—some

evidence of saving faith in Jesus,—some evidence of real evangelical holiness. Let us reject every man in whom, on the most charitable construction, we cannot see these evidences, as one weighed in the balances, and found wanting. Let us apply this sifting process to any parish in this land, and see what the result would be.

Let us set aside, first of all, those persons in a parish who are *living in any kind of open sin*. By these I mean such as fornicators, and adulterers, and liars, and thieves, and drunkards, and cheats, and revilers, and extortioners. About these I think there can be no difference of opinion. The Bible says plainly, that “they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.” (Gal. v. 21.) Now, will these persons be saved? The answer is clear to my own mind,—in their present condition they will not.

Let us set aside in the next place, those persons who are *Sabbath-breakers*. I mean by this expression, those who seldom or never go to a place of worship, though they have the power,—those who do not give the Sabbath to God, but to themselves,—those who think of nothing but doing their own ways and finding their own pleasure upon Sundays. They show plainly, that they are not meet for heaven. The inhabitants of heaven would be company they could not like. The employment of heaven would be a weariness to them, and not a joy. Now will these persons be saved? The answer is clear to my own mind,—in their present condition they will not.

Let us set aside, in the next place, all those persons

who are *careless and thoughtless Christians*. I mean by this expression, those who attend many of the outward ordinances of religion, but show no signs of taking any real interest in its doctrines and substance. They care little whether the minister preaches the Gospel or not. They care little whether they hear a good sermon or not. They would care little if all the Bibles in the world were burned. They would care little if an Act of Parliament were passed forbidding any one to pray. In short, religion is not the "one thing needful" with them. Their treasure is on earth. They are just like Gallio, to whom it mattered little whether people were Jews or Christians:—he "cared for none of these things." Now, will these persons be saved? The answer is clear to my own mind,—in their present condition they will not.

Let us set aside, in the next place, all those who are *formalists and self-righteous*. I mean by this expression, those who value themselves on their own regularity in the use of the forms of Christianity, and depend either directly or indirectly on their own doings for their acceptance with God. I mean all who rest their souls on any work but the work of Christ,—or any righteousness but the righteousness of Christ. Of such the Apostle Paul has expressly testified, "by the deeds of the law shall no flesh living be justified." (Rom. iii. 20.) "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." (1 Cor. iii. 11.) And dare we say, in the face of such texts, that such as these will be saved? The answer is plain to my own mind,—in their present condition they will not.

Let us set aside, in the next place, all those who *know the Gospel with their heads, but do not obey it with their hearts*. These are those unhappy persons who have eyes to see the way of life, but have not will or courage to walk in it. They approve sound doctrine. They will not listen to preaching which does not contain it. But the fear of man, or the cares of the world, or the love of money, or the dread of offending relations, perpetually holds them back. They will not come out boldly, and take up the cross, and confess Christ before men. Of these also the Bible speaks expressly: "Faith if it hath not works is dead, being alone." (James ii. 17.) "To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." (James iv. 17.) "Whosoever shall be ashamed of me in this generation, of him will the Son of man be ashamed when He cometh in the glory of His Father, with the holy angels." (Mark viii. 38.) Shall we say that such as these will be saved? The answer is clear to my own mind,—in their present condition they will not.

Let us set aside, in the last place, all those who are *hypocritical professors*. I mean by that expression, all those whose religion consists in talk and high profession, and in nothing besides. These are they of whom the prophet Ezekiel speaks, saying, "With their mouth they show much love, but their heart goeth after their covetousness." (Ezek. xxxiii. 31.) They profess that they know God, but in works they deny Him. They have a form of godliness, but they have not the power of it. They are saints at church, and saints to talk to in public. But they are not saints in private; and,

worst of all, they are not saints in heart. There can be no doubt there are many such persons. Shall we say that they will be saved? There can only be one answer,—in their present condition they will not.

And now, Reader, after setting aside these classes which I have described, I ask you, How many persons in any parish in England will there be left behind? How many after sifting a parish thoroughly and honestly,—how many men and women will remain who are in a way to be saved? How many true penitents,—how many real believers in Christ,—how many truly holy people will there be found? I put it to your conscience to give an honest answer, as in the sight of God. I ask you whether after sifting a parish with the Bible in the fashion described, you can come to any conclusion but this,—*that few persons,—sadly few persons,—are in a way to be saved.*

It is a painful conclusion to arrive at, but I know not how it can be avoided. It is a fearful and tremendous thought, that there should be so many churchmen in England, and so many dissenters,—so many seat-holders and so many pew-renters,—so many hearers and so many communicants,—and yet, after all, so few in a way to be saved. But the only question is, *is it not true?* It is vain to shut our eyes against facts. It is useless to pretend not to see what is going on around us. The statements of the Bible, and the facts in the world we live in, will lead us to the same conclusion,—*many are being lost, and few being saved.*

I know well that many do not believe what I am saying, because they think there is an immense quantity

of death-bed repentance. They flatter themselves that multitudes, who do not live religious lives, will yet die religious deaths. They take comfort in the thought, that vast numbers of persons turn to God in their last illness, and are saved at the eleventh hour. I will only remind such persons, that all the experience of ministers is utterly against the theory. *People generally die just as they have lived.* True repentance is never too late;—but repentance deferred to the last hours of life is seldom true. A man's life is the surest evidence of his spiritual state; and if lives are to be witnesses, then few are likely to be saved.

I know well that many do not believe what I am saying, because they fancy it contradicts the mercy of God. They dwell on the love to sinners, which the Gospel reveals. They point to the offers of pardon and forgiveness, which abound in the Bible. They ask us if we maintain, in the face of all this, that only few people will be saved. I answer, I will go as far as any one in exalting God's mercy in Christ, but I cannot shut my eyes against the fact, that this mercy profits no man, so long as it is wilfully refused. I see nothing wanting, on God's part, for man's salvation. I see room in heaven for the chief of sinners. I see willingness in Christ to receive the most ungodly. I see power in the Holy Ghost to renew the most ungodly. But I see, on the other hand, desperate *unbelief* in man :—he will not believe what God tells him in the Bible. I see desperate *pride* in man :—he will not bow his heart to receive the Gospel as a little child. I see desperate *sloth* in man :—he will not take the trouble to arise and call upon God.

I see desperate *worldliness* in man :—he will not loose his hold on the poor perishable things of time, and consider eternity. In short, I see the words of our Lord continually verified :—“Ye will not come unto me, that ye might have life,” (John v. 40.) and therefore I am *driven* to the sorrowful conclusion, that few are likely to be saved.

I know well that many will not believe what I am saying, because they refuse to observe the evil there is in the world. They live in the midst of a little circle of good people. They know little of anything that goes on in the world outside that circle. They tell us the world is a world which is rapidly improving and going on to perfection. They count up on their fingers, the number of good ministers whom they have heard and seen in the last year. They call our attention to the number of religious societies, and religious meetings, to the money which is subscribed, to the Bibles and tracts which are being constantly distributed. They ask us, if we really dare to say, in the face of all this, that few are in a way to be saved. In reply, I will only remind these amiable people, that there are other people in the world besides their own little circle, and other men and women, besides the chosen few whom they know in their own congregation. I entreat them to open their eyes, and see things as they really are. I assure them, there are things in this country of ours of which they are at present in happy ignorance. I ask them to sift any parish or congregation in England, with the Bible, before they condemn me hastily. I tell them, if they will do this honestly they will soon find

that I am not far wrong, when I say, that few are likely to be saved.

I know well that many will not believe me, because they think such a doctrine very narrow-minded and exclusive. I utterly deny the charge. I disclaim any sympathy with those Christians, who condemn everybody outside their own communion, and appear to shut the door of heaven against everybody who does not see everything with their eyes. Whether Roman Catholic, or Episcopalian, or Free-churchman, or Baptist,—whoever does anything of this kind, I reckon him an exclusive man. I have no desire to shut up the kingdom of heaven against any one. All I say is, that none will enter that kingdom, except *converted, believing, and holy souls*,—and all I take on me to assert is, that both the Bible and facts combine to prove that such persons are few.

I know well that many will not believe what I am saying, because they think it a gloomy, uncharitable doctrine. It is easy to make vague general assertions of this kind. It is not so easy to show that any doctrine deserves to be called gloomy and uncharitable which is scriptural and true. There is a spurious charity, I am aware, which dislikes all strong statements in religion,—a charity which would have no one interfered with,—a charity which would have every one let alone in his sins,—a charity which, without evidence, takes for granted that everybody is in a way to be saved,—a charity which never doubts that all people are going to heaven, and seems to deny the existence of such a place as hell. But such charity is not the charity of the

New Testament, and does not deserve the name. Give me the charity which tries everything by the light of the Bible, and believes nothing, and hopes nothing, which is not sanctioned by the Word. Give me the charity which is not blind, and deaf, and stupid, but has eyes to see, and senses to discern between him that feareth God, and him that feareth him not. Such charity will rejoice in nothing but the truth, and will confess with sorrow, that I tell nothing but the truth, when I say that few are likely to be saved.

I know well that many will not believe me, because they think it presumptuous to have any opinion at all about the number of the saved. But will these people dare to tell us that the Bible has not spoken plainly as to the character of saved souls? And will they dare to say that there is any standard of truth except the Bible? Surely there can be no presumption in asserting that which is agreeable to the Bible. I tell them plainly, that the charge of presumption does not lie at my door. I say that he is the truly presumptuous man who, when the Bible has said a thing clearly and unmistakeably, refuses to receive it.

I know well that many will not believe me, because they think my statement extravagant, and unwarrantable. They regard it as a piece of fanaticism, unworthy of the attention of a rational man. They look on ministers who make such assertions, as weak-minded persons, and wanting in common sense. I can bear such imputations unmoved. I only ask those who make them, to show me some plain proof that they are right, and I am wrong. Let them show me, if they can, that

anybody is likely to get to heaven, whose heart is not renewed,—who is not a believer in Jesus Christ,—who is not a spiritual-minded and holy man. Let them show me, if they can, that people of this description are many, compared with those who are not. Let them, in one word, point out to us any place on EARTH, where the great majority of the people are not ungodly, and the truly godly are not a little flock. Let them do this, and I will grant they have a right to disbelieve what I have said. Till they do this, I must maintain the sorrowful conclusion, that few persons are likely to be saved.

And now, reader, it only remains to make some practical application of the subject of these pages. I have set before you the character of saved people,—I have shown you the painful delusion of the world, as to the number of the saved.—I have placed before you the evidence of the Bible on the subject.—I have drawn from the world around you, plain facts in confirmation of the statements I have made. May the Lord grant, that all these solemn truths may not have been brought forward in vain !

I am quite aware that I have said many things in these pages, which are likely to give offence. I know it. It must be so. The subject is far too searching to be otherwise than offensive to some. But I have long had a deep conviction, that the subject has been painfully neglected, and that few things are so little realized, as the comparative number of the lost and saved. All that I have written, I have written because I firmly believe it to be God's truth. All that I have said, I

have said, not as an enemy, but a lover of your soul. You do not count him an enemy, who gives you a little medicine to save your life. You do not count him an enemy, who shakes you roughly from your sleep, when your house is on fire. Surely you will not count me an enemy, because I tell you strong truths for the benefit of your soul. Bear with me then, for a few moments, while I say a few last words to impress the whole subject on your conscience.

Are there few saved? Then, reader, *shall you be one of the few?* Oh! that you would see that salvation is the one thing needful! Health, and riches, and titles, are not needful things. A man may gain heaven without them. But what shall the man do, who dies not saved? Oh! that you would see that you must have salvation now, in this present life, and lay hold upon it for your own soul! Oh! that you would see that "saved or not saved," is the grand question in religion? High church or low church,—churchman or dissenter,—all these are trifling questions in comparison. What a man needs in order to get to heaven is an actual personal interest in Christ's salvation. Surely, if you are not saved, it will be better at last never to have been born.

Are there few saved? Then, reader, *if you are not one of the few already, strive to be one without delay.* I know not who and what you are, but I say boldly, come to Christ, and you shall be saved. The gate that leads to life may be strait,—but it was wide enough to admit Manasseh, and Saul of Tarsus,—and why not you? The way that leads to life may be narrow, but it is marked by the footsteps of thousands of sinners like

yourself. All have found it a good way. All have persevered, and got safe home at last. Jesus Christ invites you. The promises of the Gospel encourage you. Oh ! Reader, strive to enter in without delay.

Are there few saved ? Then, reader, *if you are doubtful whether you are one of the few, make sure work at once, and be doubtful no more.* Leave no stone unturned, in order to ascertain your own spiritual state. Be not content with vague hopes and trusts. Rest not on warm feelings and temporary desires after God. Give diligence to make your calling and election sure. Oh ! give me leave to say, that if you are content to live on uncertain about salvation, you live the maddest life in the world. The fires of hell are before you, and you are uncertain whether your soul is insured. This world below must soon be left, and you are uncertain whether you have a mansion prepared to receive you in the world to come. The judgment will soon be set, and you are uncertain whether you have an advocate to plead your cause. Eternity will soon begin, and you are uncertain whether you are prepared to meet God. Oh ! sit down this day, and study the subject of salvation. Give God no rest till uncertainty has disappeared, and you have got hold of a reasonable hope that you are saved.

Are there few that be saved ? Then, reader, *if you are one, be a thankful man.* Chosen and called of God, while thousands around you are sunk in unbelief,—seeing the kingdom of God, while multitudes around you are utterly blind,—delivered from this present evil world, while crowds are overcome by its love and fear,

—taught to know sin, and God, and Christ, while numbers, to all appearance as good as you, live in ignorance and darkness,—Oh ! Reader, you have reason every day to bless and praise God. Whence came this sense of sin, which you now experience ? Whence came this love of Christ,—this desire after holiness,—this hungering after righteousness,—this delight in the word ? Has not free grace given it, while many a companion of your youth still knows nothing about it, or has been cut off in his sins ? Oh ! Reader, you ought indeed to bless God ! Surely Whitefield might well say, that one anthem among the saints in heaven would be, “Why me, Lord ?—Why didst thou choose me ?”

Are there few that be saved ? Then, Reader, *if you are one, do not wonder that you often find yourself standing alone.* I dare believe you are sometimes almost brought to a standstill, by the corruption and wickedness that you see in the world around you. You see false doctrine abounding. You see unbelief and ungodliness of every description. You are sometimes tempted to say, “can I really be in the right in my religion ? Can it really be that all these people are in the wrong ?” Beware, Reader, of giving way to thoughts like these. Remember, you are only having practical proof of the truth of your Master’s sayings. Think not that His purposes are being defeated. Think not that His work is not going forward in the world. He is still taking out a people to His praise.—He is still raising up witnesses to Himself, here and there, all over the world. The saved will yet be found to be a multitude that no man can number, when all are gathered together at last.

The earth will yet be filled with the knowledge of the Lord. All nations shall serve Him. All kings shall yet delight to do Him honour. But the night is not yet spent. The day of the Lord's power is yet to come. In the mean time, all is going on as He foretold 1800 years ago. Many are being lost and few saved.

Are there few saved? Then, Reader, *if you are one, do not be afraid of having too much religion.* Settle it down in your mind, that you will aim at the highest degree of holiness, and spiritual-mindedness,—that you will not be content with any low degree of sanctification. Resolve that, by the grace of God, you will make Christianity beautiful in the eyes of the world. Remember, that the children of the world have but few patterns of true religion before them. Endeavour, as far as in you lies, to make those few patterns recommend the service of your Master. Oh! that every true Christian would recollect that he is set as a light-house in the midst of a dark world, and labour that every part of him may reflect light, and no side be dim!

Are there few saved? then, Reader, *if you are one, use every opportunity of trying to do good to souls.* Settle it down in your mind, that the vast majority of people around you are in awful danger of being lost for ever. Work every engine for bringing the Gospel to bear upon them. Help every Christian machinery for plucking brands from the burning. Give liberally to every Society, that has for its object to spread the everlasting Gospel. Throw all your influence heartily and unreservedly, into the cause of doing good to souls. Live like a man who thoroughly believes that time is short,

and eternity near,—the devil strong, and sin abounding, the darkness very great, and the light very small,—the ungodly very many, and the godly very few,—the things of the world mere transitory shadows, and heaven and hell the great substantial realities.—Alas! indeed for the lives that many believers live! How cold are many, and how frozen,—how slow to do decided things in religion, and how afraid of going too far,—how backward to attempt anything new,—how ready to discourage a good movement, how ingenious in discovering reasons why it is best to sit still,—how unwilling ever to allow that “the time” for active exertion is come,—how wise in finding fault,—how shiftless in devising plans to meet growing evils! Truly, a man might sometimes fancy, when he looks at the ways of many who are counted believers, that all the world was going to heaven, and hell was nothing but a lie!

Oh! reader, beware of this state of mind. Whether you like to believe it or not, hell is filling fast,—Christ is daily holding out His hand to a disobedient people, many, many are in the way to destruction,—few, few are in the way to life. Many, many are likely to be lost. Few, few are likely to be saved.

Reader, once more I ask you, *shall you be saved?* If you are not saved already, my heart’s desire and prayer to God is, that you may seek salvation without delay. If you are saved, my desire is, that you may live like a saved soul,—and like one who knows that saved souls are few.

I remain, your affectionate Friend,
J. C. RYLE.

“How Readest Thou?”

LUKE X. 26.

“What is written in the law? How Readest Thou?”

READER,

The question before your eyes is 1800 years old. It was asked by our Lord Jesus Christ. It was asked concerning the Bible.

I invite you to examine and consider this question. I warn you, it is just as mighty and important now as it was on the day when it came from our Lord's lips. I want to apply it to the conscience of every one who reads this book, and to knock at the door of his heart. I would fain sound a trumpet in the ear of every one who speaks English, and cry aloud, “How readest thou? Dost thou read the Bible?”

Why do I hold this question to be of such mighty importance? Why do I press it on the notice of every man, as a matter of life and death? Give me your attention for a few minutes, and you shall see. Follow

me through these pages, and you shall hear why I ask, "HOW READEST THOU?—DOST THOU READ THE BIBLE?"

I. I ask, first of all, because *there is no knowledge absolutely needful to a man's salvation, except a knowledge of the things which are to be found in the Bible.*

We live in days when the words of Daniel are fulfilled before our eyes:—"Many run to and fro, and knowledge is increased." (Dan. xii. 4.) Schools are multiplying on every side. New colleges are set up. Old universities are reformed and improved. New books are continually coming forth. More is being taught,—more is being learned,—more is being read, than there ever was since the world began. It is all well. I rejoice at it. An ignorant population is a perilous and expensive burden to any nation. It is a ready prey to the first Absalom, or Catiline, or Wat Tyler, or Jack Cade, who may arise to entice it to do evil. But this I say,—we must never forget that all the education a man's head can receive, will not save his soul from hell, unless he knows the truths of the Bible.

A man *may have prodigious learning, and yet never be saved.* He may be master of half the languages spoken round the globe. He may be acquainted with the highest and deepest things in heaven and earth. He may have read books, till he is like a walking cyclopædia. He may be familiar with the stars of heaven,—the birds of the air,—the beasts of the earth, and the fishes of the sea. He may be able to speak of plants,

from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop that grows on the wall. He may be able to discourse of all the secrets of fire, air, earth, and water. And yet, if he dies ignorant of Bible truths, he dies a miserable man. Chemistry never silenced a guilty conscience. Mathematics never healed a broken heart. All the sciences in the world never smoothed down a dying pillow. No earthly philosophy ever supplied hope in death. No natural theology ever gave peace in the prospect of meeting a holy God. All these things are of the earth, earthy, and can never raise a man above the earth's level. They may enable a man to strut and fret his little season here below with a more dignified gait than his fellow mortals, but they can never give him wings, and enable him to soar towards heaven. He that has the largest share of them, will find at length that without Bible knowledge he has got no lasting possession. Death will make an end of all his attainments, and after death they will do him no good at all.

A man may be a very ignorant man, and yet be saved. He may be unable to read a word, or write a letter. He may know nothing of geography beyond the bounds of his own parish, and be utterly unable to say which is nearest, Paris or New York. He may know nothing of arithmetic, and not see any difference between a million and a thousand. He may know nothing of history, not even of his own land, and be quite ignorant whether his country owes most to Semiramis, Boadicea, or Queen Elizabeth. He may know nothing of the affairs of his own times, and be incapable of telling you whether the Chancellor of the Exchequer, or the Com-

mander-in-chief, or the Archbishop of Canterbury is managing the national finances. He may know nothing of science, and its discoveries,—and whether Julius Cæsar won his victories by gunpowder, or the apostles had a printing press, or the sun goes round the earth, may be matters about which he has not an idea. And yet if that very man has heard Bible truth with his ears, and believed it with his heart, he knows enough to save his soul. He will be found at last with Lazarus in Abraham's bosom, while his scientific fellow-creature, who has died unconverted, is lost for ever.

Knowledge of the Bible, in short, is the one knowledge that is needful. A man may get to heaven without money, learning, health, or friends,—but without Bible knowledge he will never get there at all. A man may have the mightiest of minds, and a memory stored with all that mighty mind can grasp,—and yet, if he does not know the things of the Bible, he will make shipwreck of his soul for ever. Woe! woe! woe to the man who dies in ignorance of the Bible!

Reader, this is the Book about which I am addressing you to-day. It is no light matter what you do with such a book. It concerns the life of your soul. I summon you,—I charge you to give an honest answer to my question. What art thou doing with the Bible?—Dost thou read it?—HOW READEST THOU?

II. I ask, in the second place, because *there is no book in existence written in such a manner as the Bible.*

The Bible is “written by inspiration of God.” In this respect it is utterly unlike all other writings. God

taught the writers of it what to say. God put into their minds thoughts and ideas. God guided their pens in setting down those thoughts and ideas. When you read it, you are not reading the self-taught compositions of poor imperfect men like yourself, but the words of the eternal God. When you hear it, you are not listening to the erring opinions of short-lived mortals, but to the unchanging mind of the King of kings. The men who were employed to indite the Bible, spoke not of themselves. They "spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." (2 Peter i. 21.)

I shall not waste time by attempting any long and laboured proof of this. I say boldly, that the book itself is the best witness of its own inspiration. It is utterly inexplicable and unaccountable in any other point of view. It is the greatest standing miracle in the world. He that dares to say the Bible is not inspired, let him give a reasonable account of it, if he can. Let him explain the history and character of the book in a way that will satisfy any man of common sense. The burden of proof seems to my mind, to lie on him.

Here is a book, written by not less than thirty different persons. The writers were men of every rank and class in society. One was a lawgiver. One was a warlike king. One was a peaceful king. One was a herdsman. One had been brought up as a publican,—another as a Physician,—another as a learned Pharisee,—two as fishermen,—several as priests. They lived at different intervals, over a space of 1500 years; and the greater part of them never saw each other face to face.

And yet there is a perfect harmony among all these writers. They all write as if they were under one dictation. The handwriting may vary, but the mind that runs through their work, is always one and the same. They all tell the same story. They all give one account of man,—one account of God,—one account of the way of salvation,—one account of the heart. You see truth unfolding under their hands, as you go through the volume of their writings,—but you never detect any real contradiction, or contrariety of view. Tell us not that all this might be the result of chance. The man who can believe *that*, must indeed be a credulous person. There is only one satisfactory account of the book. *It was written under the direct inspiration of God.*

Here is a book that has been finished and before the world for nearly 1800 years. These 1800 years have been the busiest and most changeeful period the world has ever seen. During this period the greatest discoveries have been made in science,—the greatest alterations in the ways and customs of society,—the greatest improvements in the habits and usages of life. Hundreds of things might be named which satisfied and pleased our forefathers, which we have laid aside long ago as obsolete, useless, and old-fashioned. The laws, the books, the houses, the furniture, the clothes, the carriages of each succeeding century, have been a continual improvement on those of the century that went before. There is hardly a thing in which faults and weak points have not been discovered. There is hardly an institution which has not gone through a process of sifting, purifying, refining, simplifying, reforming,

amending, and changing. But all this time men have never discovered a weak point or a defect in the Bible. Infidels have assailed it in vain. There it stands,—perfect, and fresh, and complete, as it did eighteen centuries ago. The march of intellect never overtakes it. The wisdom of wise men never gets beyond it. The science of philosophers never proves it wrong. The discoveries of travellers never convict it of mistakes. Are the distant islands of the Pacific laid open?—Nothing is found that in the slightest degree contradicts the Bible account of man's heart. Are the ruins of Nineveh and Egypt ransacked and explored?—Nothing is found that overturns one jot or tittle of the Bible's historical statements. Are the heathen in the remotest parts of the earth induced to give up their idols?—The Bible is found to meet the wants of their consciences, as thoroughly as it did those of Greeks and Romans in the days when it was first completed. It suits all ages, ranks, climates, minds, conditions. It is the one book which suits the world. How shall we account for this? What satisfactory explanation can we give? There is only one account and one explanation. The Bible was written by inspiration. It is the book of the world, because He inspired it who formed the world,—who made all nations of one blood,—and knows man's common nature. It is the book for every heart, because He dictated it, who alone knows all hearts, and what all hearts require. *It is the book of God.*

Here is a book, which for sublimity, wisdom, and purity, is utterly unrivalled. No other book in exist-

ence comes near it. There is a style and tone of thought about it, which separates it from all other writings. There are no weak points, and motes, and flaws, and blemishes. There is no mixture of infirmity and feebleness, such as you will find in the works of even the best Christians. "Holy, holy, holy," seems written on every page. To talk of comparing the Bible with the Koran, the Shasters, or the book of Mormon, is positively absurd. You might as well compare the sun with a rushlight,—or Mount Blanc with a mole hill,—or St. Paul's with an Irish hovel,—or the Portland vase with a garden pot,—or the Koh-i-noor diamond with a bit of glass. God seems to have allowed the existence of these pretended revelations, in order to prove the immeasurable superiority of His own word. To talk of the inspiration of the Bible, as only differing *in degree* from that of such writings as the works of Emerson, Gibbon, and Voltaire, is simply a piece of blasphemous folly. Every honest and unprejudiced reader must see that there is a gulf between the Bible and any other book which no man can fathom. You feel at turning from the Scriptures to other works, that you have got into a new atmosphere. You feel like one who has exchanged gold for base metal, and heaven for earth. And how can this mighty difference be accounted for? The men who wrote the Bible had no special advantages. They had, most of them, little leisure, few books, and no learning,—such as learning is reckoned in this world. Yet the book they compose is one which is unrivalled! There is but one way of accounting for this. *They wrote under the direct inspiration of God.*

It proves nothing against inspiration, as some have asserted, that the writers of the Bible have each a different style. Isaiah does not write like Jeremiah, and Paul does not write like John. This is perfectly true,—and yet the works of these men are not a whit less equally inspired. The waters of the sea have many different shades. In one place they look blue, and in another green. And yet the difference is owing to the depth or shallowness of the part we see, or to the nature of the bottom. The water in every case is the same salt sea.—The breath of a man may produce different sounds, according to the character of the instrument on which he plays. The flute, the pipe, and the trumpet, have each their peculiar note. And yet the breath that calls forth the notes, is in each case one and the same.—The light of the planets we see in heaven, is very various. Mars, and Saturn, and Jupiter, have each a peculiar colour. And yet we know that the light of the sun, which each planet reflects, is in each case one and the same. Just in the same way, the books of the Old and New Testaments are all inspired truth, and yet the aspect of that truth varies according to the mind through which the Holy Ghost makes it flow. The handwriting and style of the writers differ enough to prove that each had a distinct individual being; but the Divine Guide who dictates and directs the whole is always one. All is alike inspired. *Every chapter, and verse, and word, is from God.*

Oh! that men who are troubled with doubts, and questionings, and sceptical thoughts about inspiration, would calmly examine the Bible for themselves! Oh!

that they would act on the advice which was the first step to Augustine's conversion,—“Take it up and read it!—take it up and read it!” How many Gordian knots this course of action would cut! How many difficulties and objections would vanish away at once, like mist before the rising sun! How many would soon confess, “The finger of God is here! God is in this book, and I knew it not.”

Reader, this is the book about which I address you this day. Surely it is no light matter what you are doing with this book. It is no light thing that God should have caused this book to be “written for your learning,” and that you should have before you “the oracles of God.” I charge you, I summon you to give an honest answer to my question. What art thou doing with the Bible?—Dost thou read it at all?—HOW READEST THOU?

III. I ask, in the third place, because *no book in existence contains such important matter as the Bible.*

The Bible handles subjects which are utterly beyond the reach of man, when left to himself. It treats of things that are invisible,—the soul,—the world to come,—and eternity;—subjects which man has no line to fathom. All who have tried to write on these subjects, without Bible light, have done little but show their own ignorance. They grope like the blind. They speculate. They conjecture. They generally make the darkness more visible, and land us in a region of uncertainty and doubt. How little did the wisest of the heathen know! How dim were the views of Solon,

Socrates, Aristotle, Plato, Cicero, and Seneca ! A well-taught Sunday-school child, in the present day, knows more eternal truth than all these sages put together.

The Bible alone describes *the beginning and end of the globe on which we live*. It starts from the birth-day of the sun, moon, stars, and earth, and shows us creation in its cradle. It foretells minutely the dissolution of all things,—when the stars shall fall from their places, and the earth, and all its works, shall be burned up,—and shows us creation in its grave. It tells us the story of the world's youth, and it tells us the story of its old age. It gives us the picture of its first days, and it gives us the picture of its last. How vast and important is this knowledge !

The Bible alone gives *a true and faithful account of man*. It does not flatter him as novels and romances do. It does not conceal his faults and exaggerate his goodness. It paints him just as he is. It describes him as a fallen creature, very far gone from original righteousness, and of his own nature inclined to evil,—a creature needing not only a pardon, but a new heart, to make him fit for heaven. It shows him to be a corrupt being, under every possible circumstance, when left to himself;—corrupt after the loss of paradise,—corrupt after the flood,—corrupt when fenced in by laws and commandments,—corrupt when the Son of God visited him as manifest in the flesh,—corrupt in the face of warnings,—corrupt in the face of miracles,—corrupt in the face of judgments,—corrupt in the face of mercies. In one word,—it shows man to be by nature always a sinner. How important is this knowledge !

The Bible alone gives us *true views of God*. By nature man knows nothing of Him. All his conceptions and ideas of Him are low, grovelling, and debased. What can be more degraded than the gods of the Canaanites and Egyptians,—of Babylon, of Greece, and of Rome? What can be more vile than the gods of the Hindoos, and other heathens, in our own times? By the Bible we know that *God hates sin*. The destruction of the world by the flood,—the burning of Sodom and Gomorrah,—the drowning of Pharaoh and the Egyptians in the Red Sea,—the cutting off of the nations of Canaan,—the overthrow of Jerusalem and the temple,—the scattering of the Jews;—all these are unmistakeable witnesses. By the Bible we know that *God loves sinners*. His gracious promise in the day of Adam's fall,—His longsuffering in the times of Noah,—His deliverance of Israel out of the land of Egypt,—His gift of the law at Mount Sinai,—His bringing the tribes into the promised land,—His forbearance in the days of the judges and kings,—His repeated warnings by the mouth of His prophets,—His restoration of Israel, after the Babylonian captivity,—His sending His Son into the world, in due time, to be crucified,—His commanding the Gospel to be preached to the Gentiles;—all these are speaking facts. By the Bible we learn that *God knows all things*. We see Him foretelling things hundreds and thousands of years before they take place: and as He foretells, so it comes to pass. He foretold that the family of Ham should be a servant of servants,—that Tyre should become a rock for drying nets,—that Nineveh should become a deso-

lation,—that Babylon should be made a desert,—that Egypt should be the basest of kingdoms,—and that the Jews should not be reckoned among the nations. All these things were utterly unlikely. Yet all have been fulfilled. Reader, once more I say, how important is this knowledge !

The Bible alone teaches us that *God has made a full, perfect, and complete provision for the salvation of fallen man*. It tells of an atonement made for the sin of the world, by the sacrifice and death of God's own Son upon the cross. It tells us that by His death for sinners, He obtained eternal redemption for all that believe on Him. The claims of God's broken law have now been satisfied. Christ has suffered for sin, the just for the unjust. God can now be just, and yet the justifier of the ungodly. It tells us that there is now a complete remedy for the guilt of sin,—even the precious blood of Christ. Whosoever believeth on Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. It tell us that there is a complete remedy for the power of sin,—even the almighty grace of the Spirit of Christ. It shows us the Holy Ghost quickening believers, and making them new creatures. It promises a new heart and a new nature to all who will hear Christ's voice, and follow Him. Reader, once more I say, how important is this knowledge !

The Bible alone *explains the state of things that we see in the world around us*. There are many things on earth which a natural man cannot explain. The amazing inequality of conditions,—the poverty and distress,—the oppression and persecution,—the shakings and

tumults,—the failures of statesmen and legislators,—the constant existence of uncured evils and abuses,—all these things are often puzzling to him. He sees, but does not understand. But the Bible makes it all clear. The Bible can tell him that the whole world lieth in wickedness,—that the prince of the world, the devil, is everywhere, and that it is vain to look for perfection in the present order of things. The Bible will tell him that neither laws nor education can ever change men's hearts,—and that just as no man will ever make a machine work well, unless he allows for friction,—so also no man will do much good in the world, unless he always remembers that the world he works in is full of sin. The Bible will tell him that there is a "good time" certainly coming,—and coming perhaps sooner than people expect it,—a time of perfect knowledge, perfect justice, perfect happiness, and perfect peace. But the Bible will tell him this time shall not be brought in by any power but that of Christ coming to earth again. And for that second coming of Christ, the Bible will tell him to prepare. Oh! Reader, how important is all this knowledge!

But time would fail me, if I were to enter fully into all the great things which the Bible reveals. It is not by any sketch or outline that the treasures of the Bible can be displayed. It would be easy to point out many other things, beside those I have mentioned, and yet the half of its riches would be left untold.

How comforting is the account it gives us of the great Mediator of the New Testament,—the man Christ Jesus! Four times over His picture is graciously drawn

before our eyes. Four separate witnesses tell us of His miracles and His ministry,—His sayings and His doings,—His life and His death,—His power and His love,—His kindness and His patience,—His ways, His words, His works, His thoughts, His heart. Blessed be God, there is one thing in the Bible the most prejudiced reader can hardly fail to understand, and that is the character of Jesus Christ !

How encouraging are the examples the Bible gives us of good people ! It tell us of many who were of like passions with ourselves,—men and women who had cares, crosses, families, temptations, afflictions, diseases, like ourselves,—and yet by faith and patience inherited the promises, and got safe home. It keeps back nothing in the history of these people. Their mistakes, their infirmities, their conflicts, their experience, their prayers, their praises, their useful lives, their happy deaths,—all are fully recorded. And it tells us the God and Saviour of these men and women still waits to be gracious, and is altogether unchanged.

How instructive are the examples the Bible gives us of bad people ! It tells us of men and women who had light, and knowledge, and opportunities, like ourselves, and yet hardened their hearts, loved the world, clung to their sins, would have their own way, despised reproof, and ruined their own souls for ever. And it warns that the God who punished Pharaoh, and Saul, and Ahab, and Jezebel, and Judas, and Ananias and Sapphira, is a God who never alters, and that there is a hell.

How precious are the promises which the Bible contains for the use of those who love God ! There is

hardly any possible emergency or condition for which it has not some word in season. And it tells men that God loves to be put in remembrance of these promises, and that if He has said He will do a thing, His promise shall certainly be performed.

How blessed are the hopes which the Bible holds out to the believer in Christ Jesus ! Peace in the hour of death,—rest and happiness on the other side of the grave,—a glorious body in the morning of the resurrection,—a full and triumphant acquittal in the day of judgment,—an everlasting reward in the kingdom of Christ,—a joyful meeting with the Lord's people in the day of gathering together;—these, these are the future prospects of every true Christian. They are all written in the book,—in the book which is all true.

How striking is the light which the Bible throws on the character of man ! It teaches us what men may be expected to be and do in every position and station of life. It gives us the deepest insight into the secret springs and motives of human actions, and the ordinary course of events under the control of human agents. It is the true discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. How deep is the wisdom contained in the books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes ! I can well understand an old divine saying, "Give me a candle and a Bible, and shut me up in a dark dungeon, and I will tell you all that the whole world is doing."

Reader, all these are things which men could find nowhere except in the Bible. We have probably not the least idea how little we should know about these things if we had not the Bible. We hardly know the

value of the air we breathe, and the sun which shines on us, because we have never known what it is to be without them. We do not value the truths on which I have been just now dwelling, because we do not realize the darkness of men to whom these truths have not been revealed. Surely no tongue can fully tell the value of the treasures this one volume contains. Well might old John Newton say that some books were *copper* books in his estimation, some were *silver*, and some few were *gold*;—but the Bible alone was like a book all made up of *bank notes*.

Think not for a moment that any part of this precious book is not profitable. Think not that such portions as catalogues and pedigrees,—as Leviticus, and the description of Ezekiel's temple,—are useless and without value. Believe me it is childish folly to question the usefulness of any word in the Bible merely because our eyes at present do not see its use.

Come with me, and look for a moment at the book of nature, and I will soon show you things of which you do not see the use.

Place yourself in imagination by the side of an Australian gold-digging, and observe the earth that is drawn up from its bottom. It is likely that your unpractised eyes will see nothing in that heap but rubbish, and dirt, and stones. And yet that very heap of earth may prove, on washing, to be full of particles of the purest gold. It is just the same with the Bible. We see but a little of it now. We shall find hereafter that every verse of it contained gold.

Place yourself in imagination on the top of some

Highland mountain. Look at the minute moss or lichen which clings to the side of that mass of rock. Tell me, if you can, what use and purpose that lichen serves. The birds of the air, the beasts of the field, the very insects leave it alone. The grouse, the ptarmigan, and red deer draw no sustenance from it. The rock does not require its covering. And yet that minute lichen is as truly a part of God's creation as the cedars of Lebanon, or the *Victoria Regia* of the South American rivers. Place it under a microscope, and you will soon see that like all other works of God, it is "very good," and full of beautiful design. Settle it down in your mind, that as it is with the book of nature, so it is with the book of revelation, the written word of God. There is not a chapter or verse from first to last, which is not in some way profitable. If you and I do not see its use, it is because we have not eyes to see it yet. But all, we may rest assured, is precious. All is "very good." Well said Bishop Jewel, "There is no sentence, no clause, no word, no syllable, no letter, but it is written for thy instruction. There is not one jot but it is signed and sealed with the blood of the Lamb."

Reader, this is the book about which I address you this day. Surely it is no light matter what you are doing with it. It is no light matter in what way you are using this treasure. I charge you, I summon you to give an honest answer to my question,—What art thou doing with the Bible?—Dost thou read it?—**HOW READEST THOU?**

IV. I ask in the fourth place, *because no book in*

existence has produced such wonderful effects on mankind at large as the Bible.

This is the book whose doctrines turned the world upside down in the days of the Apostles.

Eighteen centuries have now passed away since God sent forth a few Jews from a remote corner of the earth to do a work which, according to man's judgment, must have seemed impossible. He sent them forth at a time when the whole world was full of superstition, cruelty, lust, and sin. He sent them forth to proclaim that the established religions of the earth were false and useless, and must be forsaken. He sent them forth to persuade men to give up old habits and customs, and to live different lives. He sent them forth to do battle with vested interests, with old associations, with a bigotted priesthood, with sneering philosophers, with an ignorant population, with bloody-minded emperors, with the whole influence of Rome. Never was there an enterprise to all appearance more Quixotic, and less likely to succeed !

And how did He arm them for this battle ? He gave them no carnal weapons. He gave them no worldly power to compel assent, and no worldly riches to bribe belief. He simply put the Holy Ghost into their hearts, and the Scriptures into their hands. He simply bade them to expound and explain, to enforce and to publish the doctrines of the Bible. The preacher of Christianity in the first century was not a man with a sword and an army, to frighten people, like Mahomet, —or a man with a license to be sensual, to allure people, like the priests of the shameful idols of Hindostan.

No ! he was nothing more than one holy man with one holy book.

And how did these men of one book prosper ? In a few generations they entirely changed the face of society by the doctrines of the Bible. They emptied the temples of the heathen gods. They famished idolatry, or left it high and dry like a stranded ship. They brought into the world a higher tone of morality between man and man. They raised the character and position of woman. They altered the standard of purity and decency. They put an end to many cruel and bloody customs, such as the gladiatorial fights. There was no stopping the change. Persecution and opposition were useless. One victory after another was won. One bad thing after another melted away. Whether men liked it or not, they were insensibly affected by the movement of the new religion, and drawn within the whirlpool of its power. The earth shook, and their rotten refuges fell to the ground. The flood rose, and they found themselves obliged to rise with it. The tree of Christianity swelled and grew, and the chains they had cast round it to arrest its growth, snapped like tow. And all this was done by the doctrines of the Bible ! Talk of victories indeed ! What are the victories of Alexander, and Cæsar, and Marlborough, and Napoleon, and Wellington, compared with those I have just mentioned ? For extent, for completeness, for results, for permanence, there are no victories like the victories of the Bible.

This is the book which turned Europe upside down in the days of the glorious Protestant Reformation.

No man can read the history of Christendom as it was five hundred years ago, and not see that darkness covered the whole professing church of Christ, even a darkness that might be felt. So great was the change that had come over Christianity, that if an apostle had risen from the dead he would not have recognized it, and would have thought that heathenism had revived again. The doctrines of the Bible lay buried under a dense mass of human traditions. Penances, and pilgrimages, and indulgences, relic-worship, and image-worship, and saint-worship, and worship of the Virgin Mary, formed the sum and substance of most people's religion. The church was made an idol. The priests and ministers of the church usurped the place of Christ. And by what means was all this miserable darkness cleared away? By none so much as by bringing forth once more the Bible.

It was not merely the preaching of Luther and his friends, which established Protestantism in Germany. The grand lever which overthrew the Pope's power in that country, was Luther's translation of the Bible into the German tongue. It was not merely the writings of Cranmer and the English Reformers which cast down Popery in England. The seeds of the work thus carried forward were first sown by Wycliffe's translation of the Bible many years before. It was not merely the quarrel of Henry VIII. and the Pope of Rome, which loosened the Pope's hold on English minds. It was the royal permission to have the Bible translated and set up in churches, so that every one who liked might read it. Yes! it was the reading and circulation

of Scripture which mainly established the cause of Protestantism in England, in Germany, and Switzerland. Without it the people would probably have returned to their former bondage when the first reformers died. But by reading of the Bible the public mind became gradually leavened with the principles of true religion. Men's eyes became thoroughly open. Their spiritual understandings became thoroughly enlarged. The abominations of Popery became distinctly visible. The excellence of the pure Gospel became a rooted idea in their hearts. It was then in vain for Popes to thunder forth excommunications. It was useless for kings and queens to attempt to stop the course of Protestantism by fire and sword. It was all too late. The people knew too much. They had seen the light. They had heard the joyful sound. They had tasted the truth. The sun had risen on their minds. The scales had fallen from their eyes. The Bible had done its appointed work within them, and that work was not to be overthrown. The people would not return to Egypt. The clock could not be put back again. A mental and moral revolution had been effected, and mainly effected by God's Word. Oh! reader, those are the true revolutions which the Bible effects. What are all the revolutions recorded by Vertot,—what are all the revolutions which France and England have gone through, compared to these? No revolutions are so bloodless, none so satisfactory, none so rich in lasting results, as the revolutions accomplished by the Bible!

This is the book on which the well-being of nations

has always hinged, and with which the best interests of every nation in Christendom at this moment are inseparably bound up. Just in proportion as the Bible is honoured or not, light or darkness, morality or immorality, true religion or superstition, liberty or despotism, good laws or bad, will be found in a land. Come with me and open the pages of history, and you will read the proofs in time past. Read it in the history of Israel under the kings. How great was the wickedness that then prevailed! But who can wonder? The law of the Lord had been completely lost sight of, and was found in the days of Josiah in a corner of the temple.—Read it in the history of the Jews in our Lord Jesus Christ's time. How awful the picture of Scribes and Pharisees, and their religion! But who can wonder? The Scripture was made void by man's traditions.—Read it in the history of the church of Christ in the middle ages. What can be worse than the accounts we have of ignorance and superstition? But who can wonder? The times might well be dark, when men had not the light of the Bible.

Come with me next and look at the map of the world, and see what a tale it tells! Which are the countries where the greatest amount of ignorance, superstition, immorality, and tyranny is to be found at this very moment? The countries in which the Bible is a forbidden or neglected book,—such countries as Italy, and Spain, and the South American States. Which are the countries where liberty, and public and private morality have attained the highest pitch? The countries where the Bible is free to all, like England,

Scotland, and the United States. Yes! when you know how a nation deals with the Bible, you may generally know what a nation is. Oh! that the rulers of some nations did but know that a free Bible is the grand secret of national prosperity, and that the surest way to make subjects orderly and obedient, is to allow a free passage to the living waters of God's Word! Oh! that the people of some countries did but see that a free Bible is the beginning of all real freedom, and that the first liberty they should seek after, is liberty for the apostles and prophets,—liberty to have a Bible in every house, and a Bible in every hand! Well said Bishop Hooper, "God in heaven and the king on earth have no greater friend than the Bible." It is a striking fact, that when British Sovereigns are crowned, they are publicly presented with the Bible, and told, "This book is the most valuable thing this world affords."

This is the book which at this moment is producing the mightiest moral and spiritual effects throughout the world. This is the secret of the wonderful success which attends the London City Mission, and the Irish Church Missions. This is the true account of that amazing move toward Protestantism which has lately taken place in several departments of France. Which are the cities of the earth where the fewest soldiers and police are required to keep order?—London, Manchester, Liverpool, New York,—cities which are deluged with Bibles. Which are the churches on earth which are producing the greatest effect on mankind? The churches in which the Bible is exalted. Which are the parishes in England and Scotland where religion and morality

have the strongest hold? The parishes in which the Bible is most circulated and read. Who are the ministers in England who have the most real influence over the minds of the people? Not those who are ever crying "Church! Church!" but those who are faithfully preaching the Word. Ah! reader, a church which does not honour the Bible, is as useless as a body without life, or a steam engine without fire. A minister who does not honour the Bible, is as useless as a soldier without arms, a builder without tools, a pilot without compass, or a messenger without tidings. It is cheap and easy work for Roman Catholics, Neologians, and friends of secular education, to sneer at those who love the Bible. But the Romanist, the Neologian, and the friends of mere secular education, have never yet shewn us one New Zealand, one Tinnevelly, one Sierra Leone as the fruit of their principles. We only can do that who honour the Bible, and we say these are the works of the Word, and the proofs of its power.

This is the book to which the civilized world is indebted for many of its best and most praise-worthy institutions. Few probably are aware how many are the good things that men have adopted for the public benefit, of which the origin may be clearly traced up to the Bible. It has left lasting marks wherever it has been received. From the Bible are drawn many of the best laws by which society is kept in order. From the Bible has been obtained the standard of morality about truth, honesty, and the relations of man and wife, which prevails among Christian nations, and which,—however feebly respected in many cases,—makes so

great a difference between Christians and heathen. To the Bible we are indebted for that most merciful provision for the poor man, the Sabbath day. To the influence of the Bible we owe nearly every humane and charitable institution in existence. The sick, the poor, the aged, the orphan, the lunatic, the idiot, the blind, were seldom or never thought of before the Bible leavened the world. You may search in vain for any record of institutions for their aid in the histories of Athens or Rome. Ah ! reader, many sneer at the Bible, and say the world would get on well enough without it, who little think how great are their own obligations to the Bible. Little does the infidel think as he lies sick in one of our great hospitals, that he owes all his present comforts to the very book he affects to despise. Had it not been for the Bible, he might have died in misery, uncared for, unnoticed, and alone. Verily the world we live in is fearfully unconscious of its debts. The last day alone, I believe, will tell the full amount of benefit conferred upon it by the Bible.

Reader, this wonderful book is the subject about which I address you this day. Surely it is no light matter what you are doing with the Bible. The swords of conquering generals,—the ship in which Nelson led the fleets of England to victory,—the hydraulic press which raised the tubular bridge at the Menia ;—each and all of these are objects of interest as instruments of mighty power. The book I speak of this day is an instrument a thousand-fold mightier still. Surely it is no light matter whether you are paying it the attention it deserves. I charge you, I summon you to give

me an honest answer this day,—What art thou doing with the Bible?—Dost thou read it? HOW READEST THOU?

V. I ask, in the fifth place, *because no book in existence can do so much for every one who reads it rightly, as the Bible.*

The Bible does not profess to teach the wisdom of this world. It was not written to explain geology or astronomy. It will neither instruct you in mathematics, nor in natural philosophy. It will not make you a doctor, or a lawyer, or an engineer.

But there is another world to be thought of, beside that world in which man now lives. There are other ends for which man was created, beside making money and working. There are other interests which he is meant to attend to, besides those of his body,—and those interests are the interests of his soul.

The interests of the immortal soul are the interests which the Bible is especially able to promote. If you would know law, you may study Blackstone or Sugden. If you would know astronomy or geology, you may study Herschel and Buckland. But if you would know how to have your soul saved, you must study the written Word of God.

Reader, the Bible is "*able to make a man wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus.*" It can show you the way which leads to heaven. It can teach you everything you need to know, point out everything you need to believe, and explain everything you need to do. It can show you what you are,—a

sinner. It can show you what God is,—perfectly *holy*. It can show you the great giver of pardon, peace, and grace,—*Jesus Christ*. I have read of an Englishman who visited Scotland in the days of Blair, Rutherford, and Dickson,—three famous preachers,—and heard all three in succession. He said that the first showed him the majesty of God,—the second showed him the beauty of Christ,—and the third showed him all his heart. It is the glory and beauty of the Bible, that it is always teaching these three things more or less, from the first chapter of it to the last.

The Bible applied to the heart by the Holy Ghost, is *the grand instrument by which souls are first converted to God*. That mighty change is generally begun by some text or doctrine of the Word, brought home to a man's conscience. In this way the Bible has worked moral miracles by thousands. It has made drunkards become sober,—unchaste people become pure,—thieves become honest,—and violent-tempered people become meek. It has wholly altered the course of men's lives. It has caused their old things to pass away, and made all their ways new. It has taught worldly people to seek first the kingdom of God. It has taught lovers of pleasure to become lovers of God. It has taught the stream of men's affections to run upwards instead of running downwards. It has made them think of heaven, instead of always thinking of earth, and live by faith, instead of living by sight. All this it has done in every part of the world. All this it is doing still. What are the pretended Romish miracles which weak men believe, compared to all this, even if they were true?

Those are the truly great miracles which are yearly worked by the Word.

The Bible applied to the heart by the Holy Ghost, is *the chief means by which men are built up and stablished in the faith*, after their conversion. It is able to cleanse them, to sanctify them, to instruct them in righteousness, and to furnish them thoroughly for all good works. The Spirit ordinarily does these things by the written Word; sometimes by the Word read, and sometimes by the Word preached, but seldom, if ever without the Word. The Bible can show a believer how to walk in this world so as to please God. It can teach him how to glorify Christ in all the relations of life, and can make him a good master, servant, subject, husband, father, or son. It can enable him to bear afflictions and privations without murmuring, and say, "It is well." It can enable him to look down into the grave, and say, "I fear no evil." It can enable him to think on judgment and eternity, and not feel afraid. It can enable him to bear persecution without flinching, and to give up liberty and life rather than deny Christ's truth. Is he drowsy in soul?—It can awaken him. Is he mourning?—It can comfort him. Is he erring?—It can restore him. Is he weak?—It can make him strong. Is he in company?—It can keep him from evil. Is he alone?—It can talk with him. All this the Bible can do for all believers,—for the least as well as the greatest,—for the richest as well as the poorest. It has done it for thousands already, and is doing it for thousands every day.

Reader, the man who has the Bible, has everything which is absolutely needful to make him spiritually


wise. He needs no priest to break the bread of life for him. He needs no ancient traditions, no writings of the fathers, no voice of the church, to guide him into all truth. He has the well of truth open before him, and what can he want more? Yes! though he be shut up alone in a prison, or cast on a desert island,—though he never see a church, or minister, or sacrament again,—if he has but the Bible, he has got the infallible guide, and wants no other. If he has but the will to read that Bible rightly, it shall certainly teach him the road that leads to heaven. It is here alone that infallibility resides. It is not in the church. It is not in the councils. It is not in ministers. It is only in the written Word.

I know well that many say they have found no saving power in the Bible. They tell us they have tried to read it, and have learned nothing from it. They can see in it nothing but hard and deep things. They ask us what we mean by talking of its power.

I answer that the Bible no doubt contains hard things, or else it would not be the book of God. It contains things hard to comprehend, but only hard because we have not grasp of mind to comprehend them. It contains things above our reasoning powers, but nothing that might not be explained, if the eyes of our understanding were not feeble and dim. But is not an acknowledgement of our own ignorance the very corner stone and foundation of all knowledge? Must not many things be taken for granted in the beginning of every science, before we can proceed one step towards acquaintance with it? Do we not require our children to learn many things of which they cannot see the meaning at

first? And ought we not then to expect to find deep things when we begin studying the Word of God, and yet to believe that if we persevere in reading it, the meaning of many of them will one day be made clear? No doubt we ought so to expect, and so to believe. We must read with humility. We must take much on trust. We must believe that what we know not now, we shall know hereafter, some part in this world, and all in the world to come.

But I ask that man who has given up reading the Bible, because it contains hard things, whether he did not find many things in it easy and plain? I put it to his conscience, whether he did not see great landmarks and leading principles in it all the way through? I ask him whether the things needful to salvation did not stand out boldly before his eyes, like the light-house on English headlands from the Land's end to the mouth of the Thames. What should we think of the captain of a steamer, who brought up at night in the entrance of the Channel, on the plea that he did not know every parish, and village, and creek, along the British coast? Should we not think him a lazy coward, when the lights on the Lizard, and Eddystone, and the Start, and Portland, and St. Catherine's, and Beachy Head, and Dungeness, and the Forelands, were shining forth like so many lamps, to guide him up to the river? Should we not say, why did you not steer by the great leading lights? And what ought we to say to the man who gives up reading the Bible, because it contains hard things, when his own state, and the path to heaven, and the way to serve God, are all written down clearly and



unmistakeably, as with a sunbeam? Surely we ought to tell that man, that his objections are no better than lazy excuses, and do not deserve to be heard.

I know well that many raise the objection, that thousands read the Bible, and are not a whit the better for their reading. And they ask us, when this is the case, what becomes of the Bible's boasted power.

I answer, that the reason why so many read the Bible without benefit is plain and simple;—they do not read it in the right way. There is generally a right way and a wrong way of doing everything in the world; and just as it is with other things, so it is in the matter of reading the Bible. The Bible is not so entirely different from all other books, as to make it of no importance in what spirit and manner you read it. It does not do good, as a matter of course, by merely running our eyes over the print, any more than the sacraments do good by mere virtue of our receiving them. It does not ordinarily do good, unless it is read with humility and earnest prayer. The best steam engine that was ever built, is useless if a man does not know how to work it. The best sun-dial that was ever constructed, will not tell its owner the time of day, if he is so ignorant as to put it up in the shade. Just as it is with that steam engine, and that sun-dial, so it is with the Bible. When men read it without profit, *the fault is not in the book, but in themselves.*

I tell the man who doubts the power of the Bible, because many read, and are no better for the reading, that the abuse of a thing is no argument against the use of it. I tell him boldly, that never did man or

woman read that book in a childlike persevering spirit, —like the Ethiopian eunuch, and the Bereans,—and miss the way to heaven. Yes! many a broken cistern will be exposed to shame in the day of judgment, but there will not rise up one soul who will be able to say, that he went thirsting to the Bible, and found in it no living water,—he searched for truth in the Scriptures, and searching did not find it. The words which are spoken of Wisdom in the Proverbs, are strictly true of the Bible: “If thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; Then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God.” (Prov. ii. 3, 4, 5.)

Reader, this wonderful book is the subject about which I address you this day. Surely it is no light matter what you are doing with the Bible. What should you think of the man, who in time of cholera despised a sure receipt for preserving the health of his body? What must be thought of you, if you despise the only sure receipt for the everlasting health of your soul? I charge you, I intreat you, to give an honest answer to my question. What dost thou do with the Bible?—Dost thou read it?—HOW READEST THOU?

VI. I ask, in the sixth place, because *no gift of God to man is so awfully neglected and misused as the Bible.*

Man has an unhappy skill in abusing God's gifts. His privileges, and power, and faculties, are all ingenuously perverted to other ends than those for which they were bestowed. His speech, his imagination, his

intellect, his strength, his time, his influence, his money, —instead of being used as instruments for glorifying his Maker,—are generally employed for his own selfish ends. And just as man naturally makes a bad use of his other mercies, so he does the written Word. One sweeping charge may be brought against the whole of Christendom, and that charge is, neglect and abuse of the Bible.

Reader, I know that this charge sounds awful. Listen to me, and I will give you proofs to substantiate it. Awful as it is, it is sadly true.

It is true of the Roman Catholic Church, from one end of the world to the other. For six hundred years that unhappy church has waged open war with the Bible, and has laboured incessantly to prevent people reading it. By a rule deliberately passed in the great council of Trent,—by the bulls of Popes,—by the encyclical letters of Romish bishops,—by the repeated open hostility of Romish priests,—the views of the Church of Rome on this subject have been made fully manifest. Of all the numerous and soul-ruining errors of which the Church of Rome is guilty, none is more mischievous and productive of evil than its treatment of the Bible.

It is truly fearful to consider how thoroughly at variance God and the Church of Rome are about the Bible. The Lord God has declared positively, that Holy Scripture is “profitable,”—that it is “given for our learning,”—that it is “able to make men wise unto salvation,”—that it is “the sword” which a soldier of Christ should be armed with,—that it is “a light to our

feet,"—and that all errors arise from ignorance of it. The Church of Rome, on the other hand, has declared positively, in the council of Trent, that "If the Holy Scriptures be everywhere allowed indiscriminately in the vulgar tongue, more harm than good will arise from it,"—and that "If any one shall presume to read, or possess, a Bible, without license, he shall not receive absolution, except he first deliver it up." A license to read the Bible! What a blasphemous insult is this! It would sound as well to talk of a license to breathe God's air, or look at God's sun. Well may the Church of Rome be in gross darkness, when it pours such contempt on the written Word.

It is useless to assert, as some do, that statements such as these are not correct. It is useless to tell us that Bibles are openly paraded for sale in Roman Catholic shop windows, in English towns. The Church of Rome dares not show itself yet in its true colours in England. It winks at practices contrary to its avowed principles because it suits its purpose to do so. It throws dust in the eyes of simple people, by the appearance of toleration; and so blinds them to its real character. But the Church of Rome at heart is always the same.

Ask any one who has lived in countries on the Continent, where the power of the Pope is unrestrained, and see what he will tell you. Ask any one, especially, who has lived in Italy, and been at Rome, and seen Roman Catholic religion in full bloom, and mark what kind of account he will give you. If a man would know what real pure Presbyterianism is, he must go to

Scotland. If he would know what real pure Church-of-Englandism is, he must visit England. If he would know what real, pure, genuine Romanism is, he should go to Italy and Rome.

Is it not a fact, that to have or read an Italian Bible is one of the highest crimes an Italian can commit? He may commit adultery and fornication,—he may stab, or lie, or rob, or swear, or cheat,—and get absolution from his priest without much difficulty. But woe be to the Italian who dares to have or read God's holy Word! That fact speaks volumes. Let that fact be thoroughly known all over the world.

Is it not a fact that the Bible itself cannot be bought at Rome, unless with immense difficulty, and at an immense price? You may buy books of many other kinds and descriptions,—worthless French novels,—frivolous Italian poetry,—miserable lying accounts of pretended miracles, done by pretended saints,—prayers to the Virgin Mary, and all manner of literary rubbish. You may buy poisons, daggers, or intoxicating drinks. You may buy relics, and rosaries, and scapulars, and crucifixes. You may buy masses and services, to redeem your father's soul from purgatory. But one thing it is almost impossible to buy, and that is the one book needful,—the written Word of God. You may easily buy all means and appliances for doing the works of darkness. You cannot buy the grand help for doing the works of light, except at an enormous cost. That fact alone speaks volumes. Oh! that the world would awake, and know it! **THE BIBLE IS PRACTICALLY A FORBIDDEN BOOK AT ROME.**

Ah! reader, it is an awful thought, that all these insults to the Bible are perpetrated in the name of Christianity! It is an awful thought, that a day of reckoning is yet to come, and that God, the Judge of all, is just as jealous about His *word*, as about His *name* and *day*! It is an awful thought, that even the Emperor of China will rise up in judgment with the Pope, and condemn him; for he has lately decreed that the New Testament is a profitable book, and may be read! It is an awful thought, that this Bible-proscribing Church of Rome contains more members than any other church in the world! Surely I have a right to say, no gift from God is so neglected and misused as the Bible.

But the Church of Rome, unhappily, is not the only professedly Christian Church whose members are guilty in this matter. The charge of neglecting the Bible is one which may be brought home to the members of Protestant churches also, and among others to the Protestants of England and Scotland in the present day.

I write this statement down with sorrow. I dare say it will be received by some with surprise, if not with incredulity. But I write it down calmly and deliberately, and I am certain it is true.

I am well aware that there are more Bibles in Great Britain at this moment than there ever were since the world began. There is more Bible buying and Bible selling,—more Bible printing and Bible distributing,—than ever was since England was a nation. We see Bibles in every bookseller's shop,—Bibles of every size, price, and style,—Bibles great, and Bibles small,

—Bibles for the rich, and Bibles for the poor. But all this time I fear we are in danger of forgetting, that to *have* the Bible is one thing, and to *read* it quite another.

I am firmly persuaded that the Bible of many a man and woman in great Britain is *never read at all*. In one house it lies in a corner, stiff, cold, glossy, and fresh as it was when it came from the bookseller's shop. In another it lies on a table, with its owner's name written in it,—a silent witness against him day after day. In another it lies on some high shelf, neglected and dusty, to be brought down only on grand occasions,—such as a birth in the family,—like a heathen idol at its yearly festival. In another it lies deep down at the bottom of some box or drawer,—among the things not wanted,—and is never dragged forth into the light of day, until the arrival of sickness, the doctor, and death. Ah! these things are sad and solemn. But they are true.

I am firmly persuaded that many in Great Britain, who read the Bible, *do not read it aright*. One man looks over a chapter on Sunday evening,—but that is all. Another reads a chapter every day to his servants at family prayers,—but that is all. A third goes a step further, and hastily reads a verse or two in private every morning, before he goes out of his house. A fourth goes further still, and reads as much as a chapter or two every day, though he does it in a great hurry, and omits it on the smallest pretext. But each and every one of these men does what he does in a heartless, scrambling, formal kind of way. He does it coldly as a duty. He does not do it with appetite and pleasure. He is glad when the task is over. He forgets it all

when the book is shut. Oh! what a sad picture is this! But in multitudes of cases, oh! how true.

But how do I know all this? What makes me speak so confidently? Listen to me a few moments, and I will lay before you some evidence. Neglect of the Bible is like disease of the body. It shows itself in the face of a man's conduct. It tells its own tale. It cannot be hid.

I am sure that many neglect the Bible, *because of the enormous ignorance of true religion which everywhere prevails.* There are thousands of professing Christians in this Protestant country who know literally nothing about the Gospel. They could not give you the slightest account of its distinctive doctrines. They have no more idea of the meaning of conversion, grace, faith, justification, and sanctification, than of so many words and names in Arabic. If you were to ask them whether regeneration, and the new creature, were a beast, a man, or a doctrine, they could not tell. And can I suppose such persons read the Scriptures? I cannot suppose it. I do not believe they do.

I am sure that many neglect the Bible, *because of the utter indifference with which they regard false doctrine.* They will talk with perfect coolness of others having become Roman Catholics, or Socinians, or Mormonites, as if it were all the same thing in the long run. And can I suppose such persons search the Scriptures? I cannot suppose it. I do not believe they do.

I am sure that many neglect the Bible, *because of the readiness with which they receive false doctrines.* They are led astray by the first preacher of lies they meet

with, who has a pleasant voice, a nice manner, and a gift of eloquent speech. They swallow all he says without enquiry, and believe him as implicitly as Papists do the Pope. And can I suppose such persons search the Scriptures? I cannot suppose it. I do not believe they do.

I am sure that many neglect the Bible, *because of the bitterness with which they contend for some little secondary unimportant point in religion.* They make a "Shibboleth" of their own little cherished point, and are ready to set down every one as no Christian, if he does not see it with their eyes. And can I suppose such persons really search the whole Scriptures? I cannot suppose it. I do not believe they do.

I am sure that many neglect the Bible, *because of the very scanty knowledge they have of its contents.* They know a certain set of doctrines. They can repeat a certain string of hackneyed texts. But they never seem to get beyond this little string. Let a man talk to them about some text out of their beaten path, and he is at once out of their depth. They listen, but have nothing to say. Let a minister preach to them anything but the merest elements of Christianity, and they appear shocked at him as a rash and unsound teacher. In short, they seem content to remain in the condition described by St. Paul to the Hebrews, always unskilful in the word of righteousness,—always in a state of religious babyhood. And can I suppose such persons really search the Scriptures? I cannot suppose it. I do not believe they do.

I am sure that many neglect the Bible, *because of the*

lives they live. They do the very things that God plainly forbids. They neglect the very things that God plainly commands. They break God's laws week after week without shame. And can I suppose such persons search the Scriptures? I allow that much knowledge of the Bible and much wickedness of heart may sometimes be found together. But when I see a wicked life, I generally believe there is a neglected Bible.

I am sure that many neglect the Bible, *because of the deaths they die.* They send for a minister in their last moments, and ask for the "consolations of religion." And in what state are they found? They know nothing whatever of the way of salvation. They have to be told which are the first principles of the Gospel of Christ. And can I suppose such persons have searched the Scriptures? I cannot suppose it. I do not believe they have.

I bring forward all this evidence with sorrow. I know well it will be offensive to some. But I believe I have stated nothing but glaring facts, which every true Christian and true minister of Christ's Gospel will readily confirm. And I say that these facts prove the existence of a sore evil in Great Britain,—I mean a neglected Bible. These things would never be, if the Bible was thoroughly *read* by many, as well as *possessed*.

Ah! reader, it is a painful thought, that there should be so much profession of love to the Bible among us, and so little proof that the Bible is read! Here we are, as a nation, pluming ourselves on our Protestantism, and yet neglecting the foundation on which Protestantism is built! Here we are, thanking God with our lips, like

the Pharisee, that we are not Papists, as some are, and yet dishonouring God's Word! It is an awful thought, that the people of this country will be judged according to their light, and that so many of them should be keeping that light under a bushel! Truly I have cause for saying, no gift of God is so neglected as the Bible.

Reader, this neglected book is the subject about which I address you this day. Surely it is no light matter what you are doing with the Bible. Surely when the plague is abroad, you should search and see whether the plague-spot is on you. I charge you, I entreat you, to give an honest answer to my question.—What art thou doing with the Bible? Dost thou read it? **HOW READEST THOU?**

VII. I ask in the seventh place, because *the Bible is the only rule by which all questions of doctrine or of duty can be tried.*

The Lord God knows the weakness and infirmity of our poor fallen understandings. He knows that, even after conversion, our perceptions of right and wrong are exceedingly indistinct. He knows how artfully Satan can gild error with an appearance of truth, and can dress up wrong with plausible arguments, till it looks like right. Knowing all this, He has mercifully provided us with an unerring standard of truth and error, right and wrong, and has taken care to make that standard a written book,—even the Scripture.

No one can look round the world, and not see the wisdom of such a provision. No one can live long, and not find out that he is constantly in need of a counsellor

and adviser,—of a rule of faith and practice, on which he can depend. Unless he lives like a beast, without a soul and conscience, he will find himself constantly assailed by difficult and puzzling questions. He will be often asking himself, What must I believe? and what must I do?

The world is full of difficulties about points of *doctrine*. The house of error lies close alongside the house of truth. The door of one is so like the door of the other, that there is continual risk of mistakes.

Does a man read or travel much? He will soon find the most opposite opinions prevailing among those who are called Christians. He will discover that different persons give the most different answers to the important question, What shall I do to be saved? The Roman Catholic and the Protestant,—the Neologian and the Tractarian,—the Mormonite and the Swedenborgian,—each and all will assert that he alone has the truth. Each and all will tell him that safety is only to be found in his party. Each and all say, "Come with us." All this is puzzling. What shall a man do?

Does he settle down quietly in some English or Scotch parish? He will soon find that even in our own land the most conflicting views are held. He will soon discover that there are serious differences among Christians, as to the comparative importance of the various parts and articles of the faith. One man thinks of nothing but Church government,—another of nothing but sacraments, services, and forms,—a third of nothing but preaching the Gospel.—Does he apply to ministers for a solution? He will perhaps find one minister teaching

one doctrine, and another another. Does he go to the Bishops for help? He will find what one Bishop says is right, another says is wrong. All this is puzzling. What shall a man do?

There is only one answer to this question. A man must make the Bible alone his rule. He must receive nothing, and believe nothing, which is not according to the Word. He must try all religious teaching by one simple test,—Does it square with the Bible?—What saith the Scripture?

I would to God the eyes of the laity of this country were more open on this subject. I would to God they would learn to weigh sermons, books, opinions, and ministers, in the scales of the Bible, and to value all according to their conformity to the Word. I would to God they would see that it matters little who says a thing—whether he be Father or Reformer,—Bishop or Archbishop,—Priest or Deacon, Archdeacon or Dean. The only question is,—Is the thing said Scriptural? If it is, it ought to be received and believed. If it is not, it ought to be refused and cast aside. I fear the consequences of that servile acceptance of everything which the parson says, which is so common among many English laymen. I fear lest they be led they know not whither, like the blinded Syrians, and awake some day to find themselves in the power of Rome. Oh! that men in England would only remember for what purpose the Bible was given them!

I tell English laymen that it is nonsense to say, as some do, that it is presumptuous to judge a minister's teaching by the Word. When one doctrine is proclaimed

in one parish, and another in another, people must read and judge for themselves. Both doctrines cannot be right, and both ought to be tried by the Word. I charge them above all things, never to suppose that any true minister of the Gospel will dislike his people measuring all he teaches by the Bible. On the contrary, the more they read the Bible, and prove all he says by the Bible, the better he will be pleased. A false minister may say, "You have no right to use your private judgment : leave the Bible to us who are ordained." A true minister will say, "Search the Scriptures, and if I do not teach you what is Scriptural, do not believe me." A false minister may cry, "Hear the Church," and "Hear me." A true minister will say, "Hear the Word of God."

But the world is not only full of difficulties about points of doctrine. It is equally full of difficulties about points of *practice*. Every professing Christian, who wishes to act conscientiously, must know that it is so. The most puzzling questions are continually arising. He is tried on every side by doubts as to the line of duty and can often hardly see what is the right thing to do.

He is tried by questions connected with the management of his *worldly calling*, if he is in business or in trade. He sometimes sees things going on of a very doubtful character,—things that can hardly be called fair, straightforward, truthful, and doing as you would be done by. But then everybody in the trade does these things. They have always been done in the most respectable houses. There would be no carrying on a profitable business if they were not done. — They are

not things distinctly named and prohibited by God. All this is very puzzling. What is a man to do?

He is tried by questions of a *political kind*, if he occupies a high position in life. He finds that men do things in their public capacity, which they would not think of doing in their private one. He finds that men are expected to sacrifice their own judgment, private opinion, and conscience, to the interests of their own party, and to believe that the acts of their own political friends are always right, and the acts of their political opponents always wrong. All this is puzzling. What is a man to do?

He is tried by questions in the matter of *speaking truth*. He hears things said continually which he knows are not correct. He hears a false colouring put on stories, which he knows ought to wear a different aspect. He sees additions to, and subtractions from the whole truth. He sees evasions, and equivocations, and concealments of facts in every class of society, when self's interests are at stake. He hears false compliments paid, and false excuses alleged, and false characters given. But then it is the way of the world. Everybody does so. Nobody means any harm by it. All this is very puzzling. What is he to do?

He is tried by questions about *Sabbath observance*. Can there really be any harm in travelling, or writing letters, or keeping accounts, or reading newspapers on Sunday? Is it wrong to take a situation on a railway, merely because the Sunday traffic would almost entirely keep him away from public worship? Would it be wrong to open the Crystal Palace at Sydenham on Sun-

days? Is not Christianity a religion of liberty? Do not many learned, and respectable, and titled people think that Sunday should be a day for recreation? All this is very puzzling. What is a man to do?

He is tried by questions about *worldly amusements*. Races, and balls, and operas, and theatres, and card parties, are all very doubtful methods of spending time. But he sees numbers of great people taking part in them. Are all these people wrong? Can there really be such mighty harm in these things? All this is very puzzling. What is a man to do?

He is tried by questions about the *education of his children*. He wishes to train them up morally and religiously, and to remember their souls. But he is told by many sensible people that young persons will be young,—that it does not do to check and restrain them too much, and that he ought to attend pantomimes and children's parties, and give children's balls himself. He is informed that this nobleman or that lady of rank, always does so, and yet they are reckoned religious people. Surely it cannot be wrong. All this is very puzzling. What is he to do?

He is tried by questions about *reading*. He does not wish to read what is really bad, and has not time for much reading beside the Bible. Ought he, or ought he not, to read such things as sceptical writings, or French novels, or semi-popish poetry? Can there really be much harm in it? Do not many persons, as good as himself, read these things? And after all, the Bible has not expressly forbidden Emerson or Eugène Sue. All this is very puzzling. What is he to do?

There is only one answer to all these questions. A man must make the Bible his rule of conduct. He must make its leading principles the compass by which he steers his course through life. By the letter or spirit of the Bible he must test every difficult point and question. "*To the law, and to the testimony! What saith the Scripture?*" He ought to care nothing for what other people may think right. He ought not to set his watch by the clock of his neighbour, but by the sundial of the Word.

Reader, I charge you solemnly to act on the maxim I have just laid down, and to adhere to it rigidly all the days of your life. You will never repent of it. Make it a leading principle never to act contrary to the word. Care not for the charge of over-strictness, and needless precision. Remember, you serve a strict and holy God. Listen not to the common objection, that the rule you have laid down is impossible, and cannot be observed in such a world as this. Let those who make such an objection speak out plainly, and tell us for what purpose the Bible was given to man. Let them remember that by the Bible we shall all be judged at the last day, and let them learn to judge themselves by it here, lest they be judged and condemned by it hereafter.

Reader, this mighty rule of faith and practice is the book about which I am addressing you this day. Surely it is no light matter what you are doing with the Bible. Surely when danger is abroad on the right hand and on the left, you should consider what you are doing with the safe-guard which God has provided. I charge you, I beseech you, to give an honest answer to my

question. What art thou doing with the Bible?—Dost thou read it? HOW READEST THOU?

VIII. I ask in the next place, because *the Bible is the book which all true servants of God have always lived on and loved.*

Every living thing which God creates requires food. The life that God imparts needs sustaining and nourishing. It is so with animal and vegetable life,—with birds, beasts, fishes, reptiles, insects, and plants. It is equally so with spiritual life. When the Holy Ghost raises a man from the death of sin, and makes him a new creature in Christ Jesus, the new principle in that man's heart requires food, and the only food which will sustain it is the word of God.

There never was a man or woman converted, from one end of the world to the other, who did not love the revealed will of God. Just as a child born into the world desires naturally the milk provided for its nourishment, so does a soul born again desire the sincere milk of the word. This is a common mark of all the children of God,—they “delight in the law of the Lord.”

Show me a person who despises Bible reading, or thinks little of Bible preaching, and I hold it to be a certain fact that he is not yet born again. He may be zealous about forms and ceremonies. He may be diligent in attending sacraments and daily services. But if these things are more precious to him than the Bible, I cannot think he is a converted man. Tell me what the Bible is to a man, and I will generally tell you

what he is. This is the pulse to try,—this is the barometer to look at,—if we would know the state of the heart. I have no notion of the Spirit dwelling in a man, and not giving clear evidence of His presence. And I believe it to be a signal evidence of the Spirit's presence, when the Word is really precious to a man's soul.

Love to the Word is one of the characteristics we see in Job. Little as we know of this Patriarch and his age, this at least stands out clearly. He says, "I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food." (Job xxiii. 12.)

Love to the Word is a shining feature in the character of David. Mark how it appears all through that wonderful part of Scripture, the cxixth Psalm. He might well say, "Oh! how I love thy law."

Love to the Word is a striking point in the character of St. Paul. What were he and his companions but men mighty in the Scriptures? What were his sermons but expositions and applications of the Word?

Love to the Word appears preeminently in our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. He read it publicly. He quoted it continually. He expounded it frequently. He advised the Jews to search it. He used it as His weapon to resist the devil. He said repeatedly "The Scripture must be fulfilled."—Almost the last thing He did was to "open the understanding of His disciples, that they might understand the Scriptures." Ah! reader, that man can be no true servant of Christ, who has not something of his Master's mind and feeling toward the Bible.

Love to the Word has been a prominent feature in the history of all the saints, of whom we know anything, since the days of the apostles. This is the lamp which Athanasius, and Chrysostom, and Augustine followed. This is the compass which kept the Vallenses and Albigenses from making shipwreck of the faith. This is the well which was re-opened by Wycliffe and Luther, after it had been long stopped up. This is the sword with which Latimer, and Jewell, and Knox won their victories. This is the manna which fed Baxter, and Owen, and the noble host of the Puritans, and made them strong to battle. This is the armoury from which Whitefield and Wesley drew their powerful weapons. This is the mine from which Bickersteth and M'Cheyne brought forth rich gold. Differing as these holy men did in some matters, on one point they were all agreed, —they all delighted in the Word.

Love to the Word is one of the first things that appears in the converted heathen, at the various Missionary stations throughout the world. In hot climates and in cold,—among savage people and among civilized, in New Zealand, in the South Sea Islands, in Africa, in Hindostan,—it is always the same. They enjoy hearing it read. They long to be able to read it themselves. They wonder why Christians did not send it to them before. How striking is the picture which Moffat draws of Africaner, the fierce South African chieftain, when first brought under the power of the Gospel! “Often have I seen him,” he says, “under the shadow of a great rock nearly the live-long day, eagerly perusing the pages of the Bible.” How touching is the expres-

sion of a poor converted negro, speaking of the Bible ! He said, "It is never old and never cold." How affecting was the language of another old Negro, when some would have dissuaded him from learning to read, because of his great age. "No !" he said, "I will never give it up till I die. It is worth all the labour to be able to read that one verse, 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.'"

Love to the Bible is one of the grand points of agreement among all converted men and women in our land. Episcopalians and Presbyterians, Baptists and Independents, Methodists and Plymouth Brethren,—all unite in honouring the Bible, as soon as they are real Christians. This is the manna which all the tribes of our Israel feed upon, and find satisfying food. This is the fountain round which all the various portions of Christ's flock meet together, and from which no sheep goes thirsty away. Oh ! that believers in this country would learn to cleave more closely to the written word ! Oh ! that they would see that the more the Bible, and the Bible only, is the substance of men's religion, the more they agree ! It is probable there never was an uninspired book more universally admired than Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. It is a book which all denominations of Christians delight to honour. It has won praise from all parties. Now what a striking fact it is, that the author was pre-eminently a man of one book ! He had read hardly anything but the Bible.

Away with the foolish idea, that making the Bible alone the rule of faith hinders unity, and that those who profess to glory in the Bible, and nothing but the Bible, are hopelessly divided! It is a weak invention of the enemy. It is a base calumny. No doubt there is much dissension and party spirit among mere outward professors; but among the great bulk of believing Protestants there is a wonderful amount of unity,—real, thorough, and deep, far deeper than the boasted unity of Rome. Their differences are merely about the outward trappings of Christianity. About the body of the faith they are all agreed. The differences are studiously exaggerated by the enemies of true religion. Their points of agreement,—such as the “Harmony of Protestant Confessions” exhibits, are studiously kept out of sight. Their differences are differences which in times of common danger are soon forgotten. Their unity is an unity which in front of sin, heathenism, and persecution, stands boldly out. Ridley and Hooper forgot their old disagreements when they found themselves in Queen Mary’s prisons. Churchmen and Non-conformists laid aside their quarrels when James II tried to bring back Popery to England. Protestant missionaries, of different denominations, find they can work and pray together, when they are in the midst of idolaters. Protestant believers in London have proved to the world that they can agree to labour together for the conversion of souls, maintaining that glorious institution, the London City Mission. And what is the secret of all this deep-seated unity? It comes from this,—that all believers on earth are not

only born of one Spirit, but also read one holy book, and feed on the bread of one Bible.

Ah! reader, it is a blessed thought that there will be "much people" in heaven at last. Few as the Lord's people undoubtedly are at any given time or place, yet all gathered together at last, they will be "a multitude that no man can number." They will be of one heart and mind. They will have passed through like experience. They will all have repented, believed, lived holy, prayerful, and humble. They will all have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. But one thing beside all this they will have in common. They will all love the texts and doctrines of the Bible. The Bible will have been their food and delight, in the days of their pilgrimage on earth. And the Bible will be a common subject of joyful meditation and retrospect, when they are gathered together in heaven.

Reader, this book, which all true Christians live upon and love, is the subject about which I am addressing you this day. Surely it is no light matter what you are doing with the Bible. Surely it is matter for serious inquiry, whether you know anything of this love to the Word, and have this mark of "walking in the footsteps of the flock." I charge you, I entreat you to give me an honest answer. What art thou doing with the Bible?—Dost thou read it? HOW READEST THOU?

IX. I ask, in the last place, because *the Bible is the only book which can comfort a man in the last hours of his life.*

Death is an event which in all probability is before us all. There is no avoiding it. It is the river which each of us must cross. I who write, and you who read, have each one day to die. It is good to remember this. We are all sadly apt to put away the subject from us. "Each man thinks each man mortal but himself." I want every one to do his duty in life, but I also want every one to think of death. I want every one to know how to live, but I also want every one to know how to die.

Death is a solemn event to all. It is the winding up of all earthly plans and expectations. It is a separation from all we have loved and lived with. It is often accompanied by much bodily pain and distress. It brings us to the grave, the worm, and corruption. It opens the door to judgment and eternity,—to heaven or to hell. It is an event after which there is no change, or space for repentance. Other mistakes may be corrected or retrieved, but not a mistake on our death-beds. No conversion in the coffin! No new birth after we have ceased to breathe! And death is before us all. It may be close at hand. The time of our departure is quite uncertain. But sooner or later we must each lie down alone and die. All these are serious considerations.

Death is a solemn event, even to the believer in Christ. For him no doubt the sting of death is taken away. Death has become one of his privileges, for he is Christ's. Living or dying, he is the Lord's. If he lives, Christ lives in him, and if he dies, he goes to live with Christ. To him to live is Christ, and to die is

gain. Death frees him from many trials,—from a weak body, a corrupt heart, a tempting devil, and an ensnaring or persecuting world. Death admits him to the enjoyment of many blessings. He rests from his labours:—The hope of a joyful resurrection is changed into a certainty:—He has the company of holy redeemed spirits:—He is with Christ. All this is true,—and yet, even to a believer, death is a solemn thing. Flesh and blood naturally shrink from it. To part from all we love is a wrench and trial to the feelings. The world we go to is a world unknown, even though it is our home. Friendly and harmless as death is to a believer, it is not an event to be treated lightly. It always must be a very solemn thing.

Reader, it becomes every one to consider calmly how he is going to meet death. Gird up your loins, like a man, and look the subject in the face. Listen to me, while I tell you a few things about the end to which we are coming.

The good things of the world cannot comfort a man when he draws near death. All the gold of California and Australia will not provide light for the dark valley. Money can buy the best medical advice and attendance for a man's body. But money cannot buy peace for his conscience, heart, and soul.

Relations, loved friends, servants cannot comfort a man when he draws near death. They may minister affectionately to his bodily wants. They may watch by his bed-side tenderly, and anticipate his every wish. They may smooth down his dying pillow, and support his sinking frame in their arms. But they cannot

“minister to a mind diseased.” They cannot stop the aching of a troubled heart. They cannot screen an uneasy conscience from the eye of God.

The pleasures of the world cannot comfort a man when he draws near death. The brilliant ball-room,—the merry dance,—the midnight revel,—the party to Epsom races,—the card table,—the box at the opera,—the voices of singing men and singing women,—all these are at length distasteful things. To hear of hunting and shooting engagements gives him no pleasure. To be invited to feasts, and regattas, and fancy fairs, gives him no ease. He cannot hide from himself, that these are hollow, empty, powerless things. They jar upon the ear of his conscience. They are out of harmony with his condition. They cannot stop one gap in his heart, when the last enemy is coming in like a flood. They cannot make him calm in the prospect of meeting a holy God.

Books and newspapers cannot comfort a man when he draws near death. The most brilliant writings of Macaulay or Dickens will pall upon his ear. The most able article in the Times will fail to interest him. The Edinburgh and Quarterly Reviews will give him no pleasure. Punch and the Illustrated News, and the last new novel, will lie unopened and unheeded. Their time will be past. Their vocation will be gone. Whatever they may be in health, they are useless in the hour of death.

There is but one fountain of comfort for a man drawing near to his end, and that is the Bible. Chapters out of the Bible,—texts out of the Bible,—statements

of truth taken out of the Bible,—books containing matter drawn from the Bible,—these are a man's only chance of comfort, when he comes to die. I do not at all say that the Bible will do good, as a matter of course, to a dying man, if he has not valued it before. I know, unhappily, too much of death-beds to say that. I do not say whether it is probable that he who has been unbelieving and neglectful of the Bible in life, will at once believe and get comfort from it in death. But I do say positively, that no dying man will ever get real comfort, except from the contents of the Word of God. All comfort from any other source is a house built upon sand.

I lay this down as a rule of universal application. I make no exception in favour of any class on earth. Kings and poor men, learned and unlearned,—all are on a level in this matter. There is not a jot of real consolation for any dying man, unless he gets it from the Bible. Chapters, passages, texts, promises, and doctrines of Scripture,—heard, received, believed, and rested on,—these are the only comforters I dare promise to any one, when he leaves the world. Taking the sacrament will do a man no more good than the Popish extreme unction, so long as the Word is not received and believed. Priestly absolution will no more ease the conscience than the incantations of a heathen magician, if the poor dying sinner does not receive and believe Bible truth. I tell every one who reads this book, that although men may seem to get on comfortably without the Bible while they live, they may be sure that without the Bible they cannot comfortably

die. It was a true confession of the learned Selden, "There is no book upon which we can rest in a dying moment but the Bible."

I might easily confirm all I have just said by examples and illustrations. I might show you the death-beds of men who have affected to despise the Bible. I might tell you how Voltaire and Paine, the famous infidels, died in misery, bitterness, rage, fear, and despair. I might show you the happy death-beds of those who have loved the Bible and believed it, and the blessed effect the sight of their death-beds had on others. Cecil,—a minister whose praise ought to be in all churches, says, "I shall never forget standing by the bed-side of my dying mother. 'Are you afraid to die?' I asked. 'No!' she replied. 'But why does the uncertainty of another state give you no concern?' 'Because God has said, 'Fear not; when thou passest through the waters I will be thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee.'" I might easily multiply illustrations of this kind. But I think it better to conclude this part of my subject, by giving the result of my own observation as a minister.

I have seen not a few dying persons in my time. I have seen great varieties of manner and deportment among them. I have seen some die sullen, silent, and comfortless. I have seen others die ignorant, unconcerned, and apparently without much fear. I have seen some die so wearied with long illness, that they were quite willing to depart, and yet they did not seem to me at all in a fit state to go before God. I have seen others die with professions of hope and trust in God,

without leaving satisfactory evidences that they were on the rock. I have seen others die, who I believe were in Christ, and safe, and yet they never seemed to enjoy much sensible comfort. I have seen some few dying in the full assurance of hope, and like Bunyan's "Stand-fast," giving glorious testimony to Christ's faithfulness, even in the river. But one thing I have never seen. I never saw any one enjoy what I should call real, solid, calm, reasonable peace on his death-bed, who did not draw his peace from the Bible. And this I am bold to say, that the man who thinks to go to his death-bed without having the Bible for his comforter, his companion, and his friend, is one of the greatest madmen in the world. There are no comforts for the soul but Bible comforts, and he who has not got hold of these, has got hold of nothing at all, unless it be a broken reed.

Reader, the only comforter for a death-bed is the book about which I address you this day. Surely it is no light matter whether you read that book or not. Surely a dying man, in a dying world, should seriously consider whether he has got anything to comfort him, when his turn comes to die. I charge you, I entreat you, for the last time, to give an honest answer to my question. What art thou doing with the Bible?—Dost thou read it? HOW READEST THOU?

Reader, I have now given you the reasons why I ask you a question about the Bible, on the present occasion. I have shown you that knowledge of the Bible is absolutely necessary to salvation,—that no book is written in such a manner as the Bible,—that no book contains

such matter,—that no book has done so much for the world generally,—that no book can do so much for every one who reads it aright,—that no book is so awfully neglected,—that this book is the only rule of faith and practice,—that it is, and always has been, the food of all true servants of God,—and that it is the only book which can comfort men when they die. All these are ancient things. I do not pretend to tell you anything new. I have only gathered together old truths, and tried to mould them into a new shape. Let me finish all, by addressing a few plain words to the conscience of every class of readers.

1. These pages may fall into the hands of some who can read, but never do read the Bible at all. Reader, are you one of them? If you are, I have something to say to you.

I cannot comfort you in your present state of mind. It would be mockery and deceit to do so. I cannot speak to you of peace and heaven, while you treat the Bible as you do. You are in danger of losing your soul.

You are in danger, because *your neglected Bible is a plain evidence that you do not love God*. The health of a man's body may generally be known by his appetite. The health of a man's soul may be known by his treatment of the Bible. Now you are manifestly labouring under a sore disease. Reader, will you not repent?

You are in danger, because *God will reckon with you for your neglect of the Bible in the day of judgment*.

You will have to give account of your use of time, strength, and money; and you will also have to give account of your use of the Word. You will not stand at that bar side by side with the Patagonian, who never heard of the Bible. To whom much is given, of them much will be required. Of all men's buried talents, none will weigh them down so heavily as a neglected Bible. As you deal with the Bible, so God will deal with your soul. Reader, I say again, will you not repent?

You are in danger, because *there is no degree of error in religion into which you may not fall*. You are at the mercy of the first clever Jesuit, Mormonite, Socinian, Turk, or Jew, who may happen to meet you. A land of unwall'd villages is not more defenceless against an enemy, than a man who neglects his Bible. You may go on tumbling from one step of delusion to another, till at length you are landed in the pit of hell. Reader, I say once more, will you not repent?

You are in danger, because *there is not a single reasonable excuse you can allege for neglecting the Bible*. You have no time to read it forsooth! But you can make time for eating, drinking, sleeping, and perhaps for newspaper reading and smoking. You might easily make time to read the Word. Alas! it is not want of time, but waste of time that ruins souls. You find it too troublesome to read forsooth! You had better say at once it is too much trouble to go to heaven, and you are content to go to hell. Truly these excuses are like the rubbish round the walls of Jerusalem in Nehemiah's days. They would all soon disappear if, like the Jews,

you had "a mind to work." Reader, I say for the last time, will you not repent?

I know I cannot reach your heart. I cannot make you see and feel these things. I can only enter my solemn protest against your present treatment of the Bible, and lay that protest before your conscience. I do so with all my soul. Oh! beware lest you repent too late! Beware lest you put off seeking for the Bible till you send for the doctor in your last illness, and then find the Bible a sealed book, and dark as the cloud between the hosts of Israel and Egypt, to your anxious soul! Beware lest you go on saying all your life, "Men do very well without all this Bible-reading," and find at length, to your cost, that men do very ill, and end in hell! Beware lest the day come, when you will feel, "Had I but honoured the Bible as much as I have honoured the newspaper, I should not have been left without comfort in my last hours!" Bible-neglecting reader, I give you a plain warning. The plague-cross is at present on your door. The Lord have mercy upon your soul!

2. These pages may fall into the hands of some one who is willing to begin reading the Bible, but wants advice on the subject. Reader are you that man? Listen to me, and I will give you a few short hints.

For one thing, *begin reading your Bible this very day.* The way to do a thing is to do it, and the way to read the Bible is actually to read it. It is not meaning, or wishing, or resolving, or intending, or thinking about it, which will advance you one step. You must positively

read. There is no royal road in this matter, any more than in the matter of prayer. If you cannot read yourself, you must persuade somebody else to read to you. But one way or another, through eyes or ears, the words of Scripture must actually pass before your mind.

For another thing, *read the Bible with an earnest desire to understand it.* Think not for a moment that the great object is to turn over a certain quantity of printed paper, and that it matters nothing whether you understand it or not. Some ignorant people seem to fancy that all is done, if they clear off so many chapters every day, though they may not have a notion what they are all about, and only know that they have pushed on their mark so many leaves. This is turning Bible reading into a mere form. It is almost as bad as the Popish habit of buying indulgences, by saying an almost fabulous number of ave-marias and paternosters. It reminds one of the poor Hottentot, who ate up a Dutch hymn-book, because he saw it comforted his neighbours' hearts. Settle it down in your mind, as a general principle, that a Bible not understood is a Bible that does no good. Say to yourself often as you read, "What is all this about?" Dig for the meaning like a man digging for Australian gold. Work hard, and do not give up the work in a hurry.

For another thing, *read the Bible with deep reverence.* Say to your soul, whenever you open the Bible, "O my soul, thou art going to read a message from God." The sentences of judges, and the speeches of kings, are received with awe and respect. How much more reverence is due to the words of the Judge of judges, and

King of kings ! Avoid, as you would cursing and swearing, that irreverent habit of mind, into which some German divines have unhappily fallen, in speaking about the Bible. They handle the contents of the holy book as carelessly and disrespectfully, as if the writers were such men as themselves. They make one think of a child composing a book to expose the fancied ignorance of his own father,—or of a pardoned murderer criticizing the hand-writing and style of his own reprieve. Enter rather into the spirit of Moses on Mount Horeb : “Put thy shoes from off thy feet; the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.”

For another thing, *read the Bible with earnest prayer for the teaching and help of the Holy Spirit.* Here is the rock on which many make shipwreck at the very outset. They do not ask for wisdom and instruction, and so they find the Bible dark, and carry nothing away from it. You should pray for the Spirit to guide you into all truth. You should beg the Lord Jesus Christ to open your understanding, as He did that of His disciples. The Lord God, by whose inspiration the book was written, keeps the keys of the book, and alone can enable you to understand it profitably. Nine times over in one Psalm does David cry, “Teach me.” Five times over in the same Psalm, does he say, “Give me understanding.” Well says Owen, “There is a sacred light in the Word : but there is a covering and veil on the eyes of men, so that they cannot behold it aright. Now the removal of this veil is the peculiar work of the Holy Spirit.” Humble prayer will throw more light on your Bible, than Poole’s Synopsis, or all

the commentaries that ever were written. Remember this, and say always, "O God, for Christ's sake, give me the teaching of the Spirit."

For another thing, *read the Bible with child-like faith and humility.* Open your heart as you open your book, and say, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth." Resolve to believe implicitly whatever you find there, however much it may run counter to your own prejudices. Resolve to receive heartily every statement of truth, whether you like it or not. Beware of that miserable habit of mind into which some readers of the Bible fall. They receive some doctrines, because they like them. They reject others, because they are condemning to themselves, or to some lover, or relation, or friend. At this rate the Bible is useless. Are we to be judges of what ought to be in the Word? Do we know better than God? Settle it down in your mind that you will receive all, and believe all, and that what you cannot understand you will take on trust. Remember, when you pray, you are speaking to God, and God hears you. But, remember, when you read, God is speaking to you, and you are not to answer again, but to listen.

For another thing, *read the Bible in a spirit of obedience and self-application.* Sit down to the study of it with a daily determination that *you* will live by its rules, rest on its statements, and act on its commands. Consider, as you travel through every chapter, "How does this affect *my* position and course of conduct? What does this teach *me*?" It is poor work to read the Bible for mere curiosity and speculative purposes, in order to fill

your head and store your mind with opinions, while you do not allow the book to influence your heart and life. That Bible is read best, which is practised most. For another thing, *read the Bible daily*. Make it a part of every day's business to read and meditate on some portion of God's word. Private means of grace are just as needful every day for our souls, as food and clothing are for our bodies. Yesterday's bread will not feed the labourer to-day, and to-day's bread will not feed the labourer to-morrow. Do as the Israelites did in the wilderness. Gather your manna fresh every morning. Choose your own seasons and hours. Do not scramble over and hurry your reading. Give your Bible the best, and not the worst part of your time. But whatever plan you pursue, let it be a rule of your life to visit the throne of grace and the Bible every day.

For another thing, *read all the Bible, and read it in an orderly way*. I fear there are many parts of the Word which some people never read at all. This is, to say the least, a very presumptuous habit. All Scripture is profitable. To this habit may be traced the want of broad, well-proportioned views of truth, which is so common. Some people's Bible-reading is a system of perpetual dipping and picking. They do not seem to have an idea of regularly going through the whole book. This also is a great mistake. No doubt in times of sickness and affliction it is allowable to search out seasonable portions. But with this exception, I believe it is by far the best plan to begin the Old and New Testaments at the same time,—read each straight through to the end, and then begin again. This is a

matter in which every one must be persuaded in his own mind. I can only say it has been my own plan for fifteen years, and I have never seen cause to alter it.

For another thing, *read the Bible fairly and honestly.* Determine to take everything in its plain, obvious meaning, and regard all forced interpretations with great suspicion. As a general rule, whatever a verse of the Bible seems to mean, it does mean. Cecil's rule is a very valuable one,—“The right way of interpreting Scripture, is to take it as we find it, without any attempt to force it into any particular system.” Well said Hooker, “I hold it for a most infallible rule in the exposition of Scripture, that when a literal construction will stand, the furthest from the literal is commonly the worst.”

In the last place, *read the Bible with Christ continually in view.* The grand primary object of all Scripture, is to testify of Jesus. Old Testament ceremonies are shadows of Christ. Old Testament judges and deliverers are types of Christ. Old Testament history shows the world's need of Christ. Old Testament prophecies are full of Christ's sufferings, and of Christ's glory yet to come. The first advent and the second,—the Lord's humiliation and the Lord's kingdom,—the cross and the crown, shine forth everywhere in the Bible. Keep fast hold on this clue, if you would read the Bible aright.

Reader, I might easily add to these hints, if time permitted. Few and short as they are, you will find them worth attention. Act upon them, and I firmly

believe you will never be allowed to miss the way to heaven. Act upon them, and you will find light continually increasing in your mind. No book of evidence can be compared with that internal evidence which he obtains, who daily uses the Word in the right way. Such a man does not need the books of learned men, like Paley, and Wilson, and M'Ilvaine. He has the witness in himself. The book satisfies and feeds his soul. A poor Christian woman once said to an infidel, "I am no scholar. I cannot argue like you. But I know that honey is honey, because it leaves a sweet taste in my mouth. And I know the Bible to be God's book, because of the taste it leaves in my heart."

3. These pages may fall into the hands of some one who *loves and believes the Bible, and yet reads it but little*. I fear there are many such in this day. It is a day of bustle and hurry. It is a day of talking and committee-meetings, and public work. These things are all very well in their way, but I fear that sometimes they clip and cut short private reading of the Bible. Reader, does your conscience tell you that you are one of the persons I speak of? Listen to me, and I will say a few things which deserve your serious attention.

You are the man that are likely to *get little comfort from the Bible in time of need*. Trial is a sifting season. Affliction is a searching wind, which strips the leaves off the trees, and brings to light the bird's nests. Now I fear that your stores of Bible consolations may one day run very low. I fear lest you should find yourself at last on very short allowance, and come into harbour weak, worn, and thin.

You are the man that are likely *never to be established in the truth*. I shall not be surprised to hear that you are troubled with doubts and questionings about assurance, grace, faith, perseverance, and the like. The devil is an old and cunning enemy. Like the Benjamites, he can throw stones at a hair-breadth, and not miss. He can quote Scripture readily enough, when he pleases. Now you are not sufficiently ready with your weapons, to be able to fight a good fight with him. Your armour does not fit you well. Your sword sits loosely in your hand.

You are the man that are likely to *make mistakes in life*. I shall not wonder if I am told that you have erred about your own marriage,—erred about your children's education,—erred about the conduct of your household,—erred about the company you keep. The world you steer through is full of rocks and shoals, and sandbanks. You are not sufficiently familiar either with the lights or charts.

You are the man that are likely to *be carried away by some specious false teacher for a season*. It will not surprise me, if I hear that some one of those clever, eloquent men, who can "make the worse appear the better cause," is leading you into many follies. You are wanting in ballast. No wonder if you are tossed to and fro, like a cork on the waves.

Reader, all these are uncomfortable things. I want you to escape them all. Take the advice I offer you this day. Do not merely read your Bible "a little," but read it a great deal. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly. Do not be a mere babe in spiritual

knowledge. Seek to become well-instructed in the kingdom of heaven, and to be continually adding new things to old. A religion of feeling is an uncertain thing. It is like the tide, sometimes high, and sometimes low. It is like the moon, sometimes bright, and sometimes dim. A religion of deep Bible knowledge, is a firm and lasting possession. It enables a man not merely to say, "I feel hope in Christ,"—but "I know whom I have believed."

4. These pages may fall into the hands of some one who *reads the Bible much, and yet fancies he is no better for his reading*. This is a crafty temptation of the devil. At one stage he says, "Do not read the Bible at all." At another he says, "Your reading does you no good: give it up." Reader, are you that man? I feel for you from the bottom of my soul. Let me try to do you good.

Do not think you are getting no good from the Bible, merely because you do not see that good day by day. The greatest effects are by no means those which make the most noise, and are most easily observed. The greatest effects are often silent, quiet, and hard to detect at the time they are being produced. Think of the influence of the moon upon the earth, and of the air upon the human lungs. Remember how silently the dew falls, and how imperceptibly the grass grows. There may be far more doing than you think in your soul by your Bible-reading.

The Word may be gradually producing deep *impressions* on your heart, of which you are not at present aware.

Often when the memory is retaining no facts, the character of a man is receiving some everlasting impression. Is sin becoming every year more hateful to you? Is Christ becoming every year more precious? Is holiness becoming every year more lovely and desirable in your eyes? If these things are so, take courage. The Bible is doing you good, though you may not be able to trace it out day by day.

The Bible may be restraining you from some sin or delusion, into which you would otherwise run. It may be daily keeping you back, and hedging you up, and preventing many a false step. Ah! reader, you might soon find this out to your cost, if you were to cease reading the Word. The very familiarity of blessings sometimes makes us insensible to their value. Resist the devil. Settle it down in your mind as an established rule, that whether you feel it at the moment or not, you are inhaling spiritual health by reading the Bible, and insensibly becoming more strong.

5. There may be some into whose hands these pages will fall who *really love the Bible, live upon the Bible, and read it much*. Reader, are you one of these? Give me your attention, and I will mention a few things, which we shall do well to lay to heart for time to come.

Let us resolve to *read the Bible more and more* every year we live. Let us try to get it rooted in our memories, and engrafted into our hearts. Let us be thoroughly well provisioned with it against the voyage of death. Who knows but we may have a very stormy passage? Sight and hearing may fail us, and we may

be in deep waters. Oh! to have the Word hid in our hearts in such an hour as that!

Let us resolve to be *more watchful over our Bible-reading* every year that we live. Let us be jealously careful about the time we give to it, and the manner that time is spent. Let us beware of omitting our daily reading without sufficient cause. Let us not be gaping, and yawning, and dozing over our book, while we read. Let us read like a London merchant studying the city article in the Times,—or like a wife reading a husband's letter from a distant land. Let us be very careful that we never exalt any minister, or sermon, or book, or tract, or friend, above the Word. Cursed be that book, or tract, or human counsel, which creeps in between us and the Bible, and hides the Bible from our eyes! Once more I say, let us be very watchful. The moment we open the Bible, the devil sits down by our side to tempt us. Oh! to read with a hungry spirit, and a simple desire for edification!

Let us resolve to *honour the Bible more in our families*. Let us read it morning and evening to our children and households, and not be ashamed to let men see that we do so. Let us not be discouraged by seeing no good arise from it. The Bible reading in a family has kept many a one from the goal, the workhouse, and the Gazette, if it has not kept him from hell.

Let us resolve to *meditate more on the Bible*. It is good to take with us two or three texts, when we go out into the world, and to turn them over in our minds, whenever we have a little leisure. It keeps out many vain thoughts. It clenches the nail of daily reading.

It preserves our souls from stagnating and breeding corrupt things. It sanctifies and quickens our memories, and prevents their becoming like those ponds where the frogs live, but the fish die.

Let us resolve to *talk more to believers about the Bible* when we meet them. Alas! the conversation of Christians, when they do meet, is often sadly unprofitable. How many frivolous, and trifling, and uncharitable things are said! Let us bring out the Bible more, and it will help to drive the devil away, and keep our hearts in tune. Oh! that we may all strive so to walk together in this evil world, that Jesus may often draw near and go with us, as He went with the two disciples journeying to Emmaus!

Let us resolve to *prize the Bible more*. Let us not fear being idolaters of this blessed book. Men may easily make an idol of the church, of ministers, of sacraments, or of intellect. Men cannot make an idol of the Word. Let us regard all who would damage the authority of the Bible or impugn its credit, as spiritual robbers. We are travelling through a wilderness: they rob us of our only guide. We are voyaging over a stormy sea: they rob us of our only compass. We are toiling over a weary road: they pluck our staff out of our hands. And what do these spiritual robbers give us in place of the Bible? What do they offer as a guide and provision for our souls? Nothing! absolutely nothing! Big swelling words! Empty promises of new light! High sounding jargon, but nothing substantial and real! They would fain take from us the bread of life, and they do not give us in its place so much as a

stone. Let us turn a deaf ear to them. Let us firmly grasp and prize the Bible more and more, the more it is assaulted.

Let us resolve to *remember those who have not got the Bible*. Let us labour to raise them from their low estate. None are so poor as those who have not the Scriptures. Let us think of them with pity and compassion, and not judge them by the standard of people who have the Word.

Let us deal gently with our Irish Brother. He may do many things which fill us with horror. But he “errs, not knowing the Scriptures.” *He has no Bible*.

Let us judge charitably our Italian brother. He may seem superstitious, and lazy, and indolent, and incapable of any thing great or good. But he “errs, not knowing the Scriptures.” *He has no Bible*.

Let us think lovingly of all Roman Catholic laymen on the Continent. We may feel disgusted by their adoring the Holy Coat of Tréves. We may be shocked at their credulity about the Winking Picture of the Virgin at Rimini. But we must remember that men will eat mice and rats in time of famine, and we must not marvel if souls feed on trash and garbage, when priests debar them from reading the Word. They “err, not knowing the Scriptures.” *They have no Bibles*.

Last of all, let us resolve to *live by the Bible more and more* every year we live. Let us resolutely take account of all our opinions and practices,—of our habits and tempers,—of our behaviour in public and in private,—in the world, and by our own firesides. Let us measure all by the Bible, and resolve, by God’s

help, to conform to it. Oh ! that we may learn increasingly to “cleanse our ways” by the Word !

Reader, I commend all these things to your serious and prayerful attention. I want the ministers,—of my beloved country to be Bible-reading ministers,—the congregations, Bible-reading congregations,—and the nation, a Bible-reading nation. To bring about this desirable end, I cast my mite into God’s treasury. The Lord grant that in your case it may prove not to have been in vain !

I remain,

Your affectionate Friend,

J. C. RYLE.

Have You the Spirit?

JUDE 19.

"Having not the Spirit."

READER,

I take it for granted that you believe in the Holy Spirit. The number of people in this country who openly deny the doctrine of the Trinity, is happily not great. Most persons have been baptized in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Many have been taught to repeat the Belief, or Apostles' Creed, from their youth up. Your lips have probably said a thousand times the solemn words, "I believe in the Holy Ghost."

But notwithstanding all this, I wish you to consider well what you know of the Holy Spirit beyond His name. What experimental acquaintance have you with the Spirit's work? What has He done for you? What benefit have you received from Him? You can say of God the Father, "He made me and all the world." You can say of God the Son, "He died for me and all

mankind." But can you say anything about the Holy Ghost? Can you say with any degree of confidence, "He dwells in me, and sanctifies me?" In one word, *Have you the Spirit?* This is the question I press upon your attention.

Reader, I believe the question to be one of vital importance at all seasons. I hold it to be one of special importance in the present day. I consider that clear views about the work of the Holy Spirit are among the best preservatives against the many false doctrines which abound in our own times. Suffer me then, to lay before you a few things, which, by God's blessing, may help you to answer the inquiry,—Have you the Spirit?

I. Let me *explain the immense importance of having the Spirit.*

II. Let me *point out the great general principle by which alone the question can be tried,—Have you the Spirit?*

III. Let me *describe the particular effects which the Spirit always produces on the souls in which He dwells.*

I. Let me in the first place, *explain the immense importance of having the Spirit.*

It is absolutely necessary to make this point clear. Unless you see this, I shall appear like one beating the air all through these pages. Once let your mind lay hold on this, and half the work I want to do is already done for your soul.

I can easily fancy some reader saying, "I do not see the use of this question! Supposing I have not the

Spirit, where is the mighty harm? I try to do my duty in this world. I attend my church regularly. I receive the sacrament occasionally. I believe I am as good a Christian as my neighbours. I say my prayers. I trust God will pardon my sins for Christ's sake. I do not see why I should not reach heaven at last without troubling myself with hard questions about the Spirit."

Reader, if these are your thoughts, I entreat you to give me your attention for a few minutes, while I try to supply you with reasons for thinking differently. Believe me, nothing less than your soul's salvation is bound up in the question before your eyes.

Remember for one thing, if you have not the Spirit, *you have no part in Christ, and no title to heaven.*

The words of St. Paul are express and unmistakeable: "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." (Rom. viii. 9.) The words of St. John are no less clear: "Hereby we know that he abideth in us by the Spirit which he hath given us." (1 John iii. 24.) The indwelling of God the Holy Spirit is the common mark of all believers in Christ. It is the shepherd's mark on the flock of the Lord Jesus, distinguishing them from the rest of the world. It is the goldsmith's stamp on the genuine sons of God, which separates them from the dross and mass of false professors. It is the King's own seal on those who are His peculiar people, proving them to be His own property. It is the earnest which the Redeemer gives to His believing disciples while they are in the body, as a pledge of the full redemption yet to come in the resurrection morning. This is the case of all believers. They all have the Spirit.

Let it be distinctly understood that he who has not the Spirit, *has not Christ*. He who has not Christ, has no pardon of his sins,—no peace with God,—no title to heaven,—no well-grounded hope of being saved. His religion is like the house built on the sand. It may look well in fine weather. It may satisfy him in the time of health and prosperity. But when the flood rises, and the wind blows,—when sickness and troubles come up against him, it will fall and bury him under its ruins. He lives without a good hope, and without a good hope he dies. He will rise again only to be miserable. He will stand in the judgment only to be condemned. He will see saints and angels looking on, and remember he might have been among them,—but too late. He will see lost myriads around him, and find they cannot comfort him,—but too late. This will be the end of the man who thinks to reach heaven without the Spirit.

Reader, settle these things down in your memory, and let them never be forgotten. Are they not worth remembering? No Holy Spirit in you,—no part in Christ! No part in Christ,—no forgiveness of sins! No forgiveness of sins,—no peace with God! No peace with God,—no title to heaven! No title to heaven,—no admission into heaven!—No admission into heaven,—and what then? Aye! what then? You may well ask. Whither will you flee? Which way will you turn? To what refuge will you run? There is none at all. There remains nothing but hell. *Not admitted into heaven, you must sink at last into hell.*

Reader, mark well what I say. Perhaps it startles

you. But may it not be good for you to be startled? Have I told you anything more than simple Scriptural truth? Where is the defective link in the chain of reasoning you have heard? Where is the flaw in the argument? I believe in my conscience there is none. From not having the Spirit to being in hell there is but a long flight of downward steps. Living without the Spirit, you are already on the top. Dying without the Spirit, you will find your way to the bottom.

Remember, for another thing, if you have not the Spirit *you have no holiness of heart, and no meekness for heaven.*

Heaven is the place to which all people hope to go after death. It would be well for many if they considered calmly what kind of dwelling place heaven is. It is the habitation of the King of kings, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and it must needs be a holy place. It is a place into which Scripture tells us there shall enter in "nothing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination." (Rev. xxi. 27.) It is a place where there shall be nothing wicked, sinful, or sensual, —nothing worldly, foolish, frivolous, or profane. *There*, let the covetous man remember, shall be no more money. *There*, let the pleasure-seeker remember, shall be no more races, theatres, novel-reading, or balls. *There*, let the drunkard and the gambler remember, shall be no more strong drink, no more dice, no more betting, no more cards. The everlasting presence of God, saints, and angels,—the perpetual doing of God's will,—the complete absence of everything which God does not approve,—these are the chief things which shall make up heaven. It shall be an eternal Sabbath day.

For this heaven we are all by nature utterly unfit. We have no capacity for enjoying its happiness. We have no taste for its blessings. We have no eye to see its beauty. We have no heart to feel its comforts. Instead of freedom, we should find it bondage. Instead of glorious liberty, we should find it constant restraint. Instead of a splendid palace, we should find it a gloomy prison. A fish on dry land, a sheep in the water, an eagle in a cage, a painted savage in a royal drawing-room, would all feel more at ease and in their place than a natural man in heaven. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." (Heb. xii. 14.)

For this heaven it is the special office of the Holy Ghost to prepare men's souls. He alone can change the earthly heart, and purify the worldly affections of Adam's children. He alone can bring their minds into harmony with God, and tune them for the eternal company of saints, and angels, and Christ. He alone can make them love what God loves, and hate what God hates, and delight in God's presence. He alone can set the limbs of human nature, which were broken and dislocated by Adam's fall, and bring about a real unity between man's will and God's. And this He does for every one that is saved. It is written of believers, that they are "saved according to God's mercy," but it is "by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." They are chosen unto salvation, but it is "through sanctification of the Spirit," as well as "belief of the truth." (Titus iii. 5. 2 Thess. ii. 13.)

Reader, let this also be written down on the tablet of your memory. No entrance into heaven without the

Spirit first entering your heart upon earth! No admission into glory in the next life without previous sanctification in this life! No Holy Spirit in you in this world, then no heaven in the world to come! You would not be fit for it. You would not be ready for it. You would not like it. You would not enjoy it. There is much use made in the present day of the word "holy." Our ears are wearied with "holy church," and "holy baptism," and "holy days," and "holy water," and "holy services," and "holy priests." But one thing is a thousand times more important, and that is, to be made *a really holy man* by the Spirit. We must be made partakers of the divine nature while we are alive. We must sow to the Spirit if we would ever reap life everlasting. (2 Peter i. 4. Gal. vi. 8.)

Remember for another thing, if you have not the Spirit, *you have no right to be considered a true Christian, and no will or power to become one.*

It requires little to make a Christian according to the standard of the world. Only let a man be baptized and attend some place of worship, and the requirements of the world are satisfied. The man's belief may not be so intelligent as that of a Turk: he may be profoundly ignorant of the Bible. The man's practice may be no better than that of a heathen: many a respectable Hindoo might put him to shame.—But what of that? He is an Englishman. He has been baptized. He goes to church, and behaves decently when there. What more would you have? If you do not call him a Christian, you are thought very uncharitable.

But it takes a great deal more than this to make a

man a real Christian according to the standard of the Bible. It requires the cooperation of all the Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity. The election of God the Father,—the blood and intercession of God the Son,—the sanctification of God the Spirit,—must all meet together on the soul that is to be saved. Father, Son, and Holy Ghost must unite to work the work of making any child of Adam a true Christian.

This is a deep subject, and one that must be handled with reverence. But where the Bible speaks with decision, there we may also speak with decision. And words have no meaning, if the work of the Holy Spirit be not just as needful in order to make a man a true Christian, as the work of the Father or the work of the Son. "No man," we are told, "can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Spirit." (1 Cor. xii. 3.) True Christians, we are taught in Scripture, are "born of the Spirit. They live in the Spirit. They are led by the Spirit. By the Spirit they mortify the deeds of the body. By one Spirit they have access through Jesus unto the Father. Their graces are all the fruit of the Spirit. They are the temple of the Holy Ghost. They are a habitation of God through the Spirit. They walk after the Spirit. They are strengthened by the Spirit. Through the Spirit they wait for the hope of righteousness by faith." (John iii. 6: Gal. v. 25: Rom. viii. 13, 14: Ephes. ii. 18: Gal. v. 20: 1 Cor. vi. 19: Eph. ii. 22: Rom. viii. 4: Eph. iii. 16: Gal. v. 5.) These are plain Scriptural expressions. Who will dare to gainsay them?

The truth is, that the deep corruption of human

nature would make salvation impossible, if it were not for the work of the Spirit. Without Him the Father's love and the Son's redemption are set before us in vain. The Spirit must reveal them. The Spirit must apply them, or else we are lost souls.

Nothing less than the power of Him who moved on the face of the waters in the day of creation, can ever raise us from our low estate. He who said, "Let there be light, and there was light," must speak the word to our hearts, before any one of us will ever rise to newness of life. He who came down on the day of Pentecost, must come down on our poor dead souls, before they will ever see the kingdom of God. Mercies and afflictions may move the surface of our hearts, but they alone will never reach the inner man. Sacraments, and services, and sermons may produce outward formality, and clothe us with a skin of religion, but there will be no life. Ministers may make communicants, and fill churches with regular worshippers. The almighty power of the Holy Ghost alone can make true Christians, and fill heaven with glorified saints.

Reader, let this also be written in your memory, and never forgotten. No Holy Spirit,—no true Christianity! You must have the Spirit *in* you, as well as Christ *for* you, if you are ever to be saved. God must be your loving Father, Jesus must be your *known* Redeemer, the Holy Ghost must be your *felt* Sanctifier, or else it will be better for you never to have been born.

Reader, I press the subject on your serious consideration. I trust I have said enough to show you that it is of vital importance to your soul to "have the Spirit."

It is no abstruse and mysterious point of divinity. It is no nice question of which the solution matters little one way or another. It is a subject in which is bound up the everlasting peace of your soul.—“Have you the Spirit?”

You may not like the tidings. You may call it enthusiasm, or fanaticism, or extravagance. I take my stand on the plain teaching of the Bible. I say that God must dwell in your heart by the Spirit on earth, or you will never dwell with God in heaven.—“Have you the Spirit?”

“Ah!” you may say, “I do not know much about it. I trust Christ will be merciful. I hope I shall go to heaven after all.” I answer, No man ever yet tasted of Christ’s mercy, who did not also receive of His Spirit.—No man was ever justified, who was not also sanctified. No man ever went to heaven who was not led there by the Spirit.

Reader, to have the Spirit is of the utmost importance.—“HAVE YOU THE SPIRIT?”

II. Let me, in the second place, point out the *great general rule and principle by which the question may be decided*,—“*Have you the Spirit?*”

I can quite understand that the idea of knowing whether men have the Spirit is disagreeable to many minds. I am not ignorant of the objections which Satan at once stirs up in the natural heart. “It is impossible to know it,” says one person, “it is a deep thing and beyond our reach.”—It is too mysterious a thing to inquire into,” says another, “we must be

content to leave the subject in uncertainty.”—“It is wrong to pretend to know anything about it,” says a third, “we were never meant to look into such questions. It is only fit for enthusiasts and fanatics to talk of having the Spirit.”—I hear such objections without being moved by them. I say that it can be known whether a man has the Spirit. It *can* be known. It *may* be known. It *ought* to be known. It needs no vision from heaven, no revelation from an angel to discern it. It needs nothing but calm inquiry by the light of God’s Word. Let us enter upon that inquiry.

All men have not the Holy Spirit. I regard the doctrine of an inward spiritual light enjoyed by all mankind as an unscriptural delusion. I believe the modern notion of universal inspiration to be a baseless dream. Without controversy, God has not left Himself without a witness in the heart of fallen man. He has left in every mind sufficient knowledge of right and wrong, to make all men responsible and accountable. He has given to every child of Adam a *conscience*. But He has not given to every child of Adam the Holy Ghost. A man may have good wishes like Balaam, do many things like Herod, be almost persuaded like Agrippa, and tremble like Felix, and yet be as utterly destitute of the grace of the Spirit as these men were. St. Paul tells us that before conversion, men may “know God” in a certain sense, and have “thoughts accusing or excusing one another.” But he also tells us that before conversion, men are “without God” and “without Christ,” have “no hope” and are “darkness” itself. (Rom. i. 21, ii. 15; Ephes. ii. 12, v. 8.) The

Lord Jesus Himself says of the Spirit, "The world seeth him not, neither knoweth him, but ye know him, for he dwelleth with you and shall be in you." (John xiv. 17.)

All members of Churches and baptized persons have not the Spirit. I see no ground in Scripture for saying that every man who receives baptism, receives the Holy Ghost, and that we ought to regard him as born of the Spirit. I dare not tell baptized people that they all have the Spirit, and that they only need "stir up the gift of God" within them in order to be saved. I see on the contrary that Jude speaks of members of the visible Church in his day as "not having the Spirit." Some of them probably had been baptized by the hands of apostles, and admitted into full communion with the professing Church. No matter! they "had not the Spirit." (Jude 19.)

It is vain to attempt to evade the power of this single expression. It teaches plainly that "having the Spirit" is not the lot of every man, and not the portion of every member of the visible Church of Christ. It shows the necessity of finding out some general rule and principle by which the presence of the Spirit in a man may be ascertained. He does not dwell in every one. Baptism and churchmanship are no proofs of His presence. How then shall I know whether a man has the Spirit?

Reader, the presence of the Spirit in a man's soul can only be known by *the effects* which He produces. *The fruits* He causes to be brought forth in a man's heart and life, are the only evidence that can be

depended on. A man's faith, a man's opinions, and a man's practice, are the witnesses we must examine, if we would find out whether a man has the Spirit. This is the rule of the Lord Jesus, "Every tree is known by his own fruit." (Luke vi. 44.)

The effects which the Holy Spirit produces may always be *seen*. The man of the world may not understand them. They may in many cases be feeble and indistinct. But where the Spirit is, He will not be hid. He is not idle when He enters the heart. He does not lie still. He does not sleep. He will make His presence known. He will shine out little by little through the windows of a man's daily habits and conversation, and manifest to the world that He is in him. A dormant, torpid, silent indwelling of the Spirit is a notion that pleases the minds of many. It is a notion for which I see no authority in the Word of God. I hold entirely with the Homily for Whit-Sunday, "As the tree is known by his fruit, so is also the Holy Ghost."

Reader, in whomsoever I see the effects and fruits of the Spirit, in that man I see one who has the Spirit. I believe it to be not only charitable to think so, but presumption to doubt it. I do not expect to behold the Holy Ghost with my bodily eyes, or to touch Him with my hands. But I need no angel to come down to show me where He dwells. I need no vision from heaven to tell me where I may find Him. Only show me a man in whom the fruits of the Spirit are to be seen, and I see one who has the Spirit. I will not doubt the inward presence of the almighty *cause*, when I see the outward fact of an evident *effect*.

Can I see the *wind* on a stormy day? I cannot. But I can see the effects of its force and power. When I see the clouds driven before it, and the trees bending under it,—when I hear it whistling through doors and windows, or howling round the old chimney tops, I do not for a moment doubt its existence. I say “there is a wind.” Just so it is with the presence of the Spirit in the soul.

Can I see the *dew* of heaven as it falls on a summer evening? I cannot. It comes down softly and gentle, noiseless and imperceptible. But when I go forth in the morning after a cloudless night, and see every leaf sparkling with moisture, and feel every blade of grass damp and wet, I say at once, “there has been a dew.” Just so it is with the presence of the Spirit in the soul.

Can I see the *hand of the sower* when I walk through the corn fields in the month of July? I cannot. I see nothing but millions of ears rich with grain, and bending to the ground with ripeness. But do I suppose that harvest came by chance, and grew of itself? I suppose nothing of the kind. I know when I see those corn-fields, that the plough and the harrow were at work one day, and that a hand has been there which sowed the seed. Just so it is with the work of the Spirit in the soul.

Can I see the *magnetic fluid* in the compass-needle? I cannot. It acts in a hidden mysterious way. But when I see that little piece of iron always turning to the north, I know at once that it is under the secret influence of magnetic power. Just so it is with the work of the Spirit in the soul.

Can I see the *mainspring of my watch* when I look upon its face? I cannot. But when I see the fingers going round and telling the hours and minutes of the day in regular succession, I do not doubt the mainspring's existence. Just so it is with the work of the Spirit.

Can I see *the steersman* of the homeward-bound ship, when she first comes in sight, and her sails whiten on the horizon? I cannot. But when I stand on the pier head and see that ship working her course over the sea towards the harbour's mouth, like a thing of life, I know well there is one at the helm who guides her movements. Just so it is with the work of the Spirit.

Reader, I charge you to remember this. Establish it as a settled principle in your mind that if the Holy Ghost really is in a man, it will be seen in the effects He produces on his heart and life.

Beware of supposing that a man may have the Spirit, when there is no outward evidence of His presence in the soul. It is a dangerous and unscriptural delusion to think so. We must never lose sight of the broad principles laid down for us in Scripture. "If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not the truth." "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God." (1 John i. 6. iii. 10.)

You have heard, I doubt not, of a wretched class of Christians called Antinomians. They are persons who boast of having an interest in Christ, and say they are pardoned and forgiven, while at the same time they

live in wilful sin and open breach of God's commandments. You have been told, I dare say, that such people are miserably deceived. They are going down to hell with a lie in their right hand. The true believer in Christ is "dead to sin." Every man that has real hope in Christ "purifieth himself even as He is pure." (1 John iii. 3.)

But I will tell you of a delusion quite as dangerous as that of the Antinomians, and far more specious. That delusion is, to flatter yourself you have the Spirit dwelling in your heart, while there are no fruits of the Spirit to be seen in your life. I firmly believe that this delusion is ruining thousands as surely as Antinomianism. It is just as perilous to dishonour the Holy Ghost, as it is to dishonour Christ. It is just as offensive to God to pretend to an interest in the work of the Spirit, as it is to pretend to an interest in the work of Christ.

Once for all, I charge my readers to remember that the effects which the Spirit produces are the only trustworthy evidences of His presence. To talk of the Holy Ghost dwelling in you and yet being unseen in your life, is wild work indeed. It confounds the first principles of the Gospel. It confounds light and darkness,—nature and grace,—conversion and unconversion,—faith and unbelief,—the children of God and the children of the devil.

There is only one safe position in this matter. There is only one safe answer to the question, "How shall we decide who have the Spirit?" We must take our stand on the old principle laid down by our Lord Jesus Christ,

“By their fruits ye shall know them.” (Matt. vii. 20.) Where the Spirit is, there will be fruit. He who has no fruit of the Spirit, has not the Spirit. A work of the Spirit unfelt, unseen, inoperative, is a positive delusion. Where the Spirit really is, He will be felt, seen, and known. Reader, HAVE YOU THE SPIRIT?

III. Let me, in the last place, *describe the particular effects which the Spirit produces on the souls in which He dwells.*

I regard this part of the subject as the most important of all. Hitherto I have spoken generally of the great leading principles which must guide us in inquiring about the work of the Holy Ghost. I must now come closer, and speak of the special marks by which the presence of the Holy Ghost in any individual heart may be discerned. Happily, with the Bible for our light, these marks are not hard to find out. Reader, I invite your serious attention. Come and learn whether you have on your soul the marks of the Spirit.

Some things I wish to premise before entering fully into the subject. It is needful in order to clear the way.

I grant freely that there are *some deep mysteries* about the work of the Spirit. I cannot explain the manner of His coming into the heart. “The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit.” (John iii. 8.) I cannot explain why He comes into one heart and not into another,—why he condescends to dwell in this man and not in that. I only know that

so it is. He acts as a sovereign. To use the words of the Church Catechism, He "sanctifieth the elect people of God." But I remember also, that I cannot explain why I was born in Christian England, and not in heathen Africa. I am satisfied to believe that all God's work is well done. It is enough for me to be in the King's court, without being of the King's counsel.

I grant freely that there are *great diversities* in the operations by which the Spirit carries on His work in men's souls. There are differences in the *ages* at which He begins to enter the heart. With some He begins young, as with John the Baptist and Timothy. With some He begins old, as with Manasseh and Zaccheus.—There are differences in the *feelings* which He first stirs up in the heart, He leads some by strong terror and alarm, like the jailor of Philippi. He leads some by gently opening their hearts to receive the truth, as Lydia, the purple-seller.—There are differences in the *time occupied* in effecting this complete change of character. With some the change is immediate and sudden, as it was with Saul when he journeyed to Damascus. With others it is gradual and slow, as it was with Nicodemus the Pharisee.—There are differences in the *instruments* He uses in first awakening the soul from its natural death. With some He uses a sermon, with others the Bible, with others a tract, with others a friend's advice, with others a sickness or affliction, with others no one particular thing, that can be distinctly traced. All this is most important to understand. To require all persons to be squared down to one kind of experience is a most grievous mistake.

I grant freely that the *beginnings of the Spirit's work are often small and imperceptible*. The seed from which the spiritual character is formed is often very minute at first. The fountain head of the spiritual life, like that of many a mighty river, is frequently at its outset a little trickling stream. The beginnings therefore of the Spirit's work in a soul are generally overlooked by the world,—very frequently not duly valued and encouraged by other Christians,—and almost without exception thoroughly misunderstood by the soul itself which is the subject of them. *Let that never be forgotten*. The man in whom the Spirit begins to work, is never hardly aware, till long afterwards, that his state of mind about the time of his conversion, arose from the entrance of the Holy Spirit.

But still after all these concessions and allowances, there are certain great leading effects which the Spirit produces on the soul in which He dwells, which are always one and the same. Those who have the Spirit, may be led at first by different paths, but they are always brought, sooner or later, into one and the same narrow way. Their leading opinions in religion are the same. Their leading desires are the same. Their general walk is the same. They may differ from one another widely in their natural character, but their spiritual character, in its main features, is always one. The Holy Ghost always produces one general kind of effects. Shades and varieties there are no doubt in the experience of those on whose hearts He works, but the general outline of their faith and life is always the same.

What then are these general effects which the Spirit

always produces on those who really have Him? What are the marks of His presence in the soul? This is the question which now remains to be considered. Let us try to set these marks down in order.

1. All who have the Spirit, are *quickened by Him, and made spiritually alive*. He is called in Scripture, "The Spirit of life." (Rom. viii. 3.) "It is the Spirit," says our Lord Jesus Christ, "that quickeneth." (John vi. 53.) We are all by nature dead in trespasses and sins. We have neither feeling nor interest about religion. We have neither faith, nor hope, nor fear, nor love. Our hearts are in a state of torpor. They are compared in Scripture to a stone. We may be alive about money, learning, politics, or pleasure, but we are dead towards God.—All this is changed when the Spirit comes into the heart. He raises us from this state of death, and makes us new creatures. He awakens the conscience. He inclines the will towards God. He causes old things to pass away, and all things to become new. He gives us a new heart. He makes us put off the old man, and put on the new. He blows the trumpet in the ear of our slumbering faculties, and sends us forth to walk the world as if we were new beings. How unlike was Lazarus corrupting in the silent tomb, to Lazarus coming forth at our Lord's command! How unlike was Jairus' daughter lying cold on her bed amidst weeping friends, to Jairus' daughter rising and speaking to her mother as she was wont to do! Just as unlike is the man in whom the Spirit dwells to what he was before the Spirit came into him.

Reader, can he whose heart is manifestly full of everything but God,—hard, cold, and insensible,—can he be said to have the Spirit? Judge for yourself.

2. All who have the Spirit, are *taught by Him*. He is called in Scripture, “The Spirit of wisdom and revelation.” (Ephes. i. 17.) It was the promise of the Lord Jesus, “He shall teach you all things. He shall guide you into all truth.” (John xiv. 26; xvi. 13.) We are all by nature ignorant of spiritual truth. “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God. They are foolishness to him.” (1 Cor. ii. 14.) Our eyes are blinded. We neither know God, nor Christ, nor ourselves, nor the world, nor sin, nor heaven, nor hell, as we ought. We see everything under false colours.—The Spirit alters entirely this state of things. He opens the eyes of our understandings. He illumines us. He calls us out of darkness into marvellous light. He takes away the veil. He shines into our hearts, and makes us see things as they really are. No wonder that all true Christians are so remarkably agreed upon the essentials of true religion. The reason is that they have all learned in one school—the school of the Holy Ghost. No wonder that true Christians can understand each other at once, and find common ground of communion. They have been taught the same language, by one whose lessons are never forgotten.


Reader, can he who is ignorant of the leading doctrines of the Gospel, and blind to his own state,—can he be said to have the Spirit? Judge for yourself.

3. All who have the Spirit *are led by Him to the*

Scriptures. This is the instrument by which He specially works on the soul. The Word is called "the sword of the Spirit." Those who are born again are said to be "born by the Word." (Ephes. vi. 17; 1 Peter i. 23.) All Scripture was written under His inspiration. He never teaches anything which is not therein written. He causes the man in whom He dwells to "delight in the law of the Lord." Just as the infant desires the milk which nature has provided for it, and refuses all other food, so does the soul which has the Spirit, desire the sincere milk of the word. Just as the Israelites fed on the manna in the wilderness, so are the children of God taught by the Holy Ghost, to feed on the contents of the Bible.

Reader, can he who never reads the Bible, or only reads it formally,—can he be said to have the Spirit? Judge for yourself.

4. All who have the Spirit, are *convinced by Him of sin*. This is an especial office which the Lord Jesus promised He should fulfil. "When he is come he shall reprove the world of sin." (John xvi. 8.) He alone can open a man's eyes to the real extent of his guilt and corruption before God. He always does this when He comes into the soul. He puts us in our right place. He shows us the vileness of our own hearts, and makes us cry with the publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner." He pulls down those proud, self-righteous, self-justifying notions with which we are all born, and makes us feel as we ought to feel, "I am a bad man, and I deserve to be in hell." Ministers may alarm us for a little season. Sickness may break the ice on our



hearts. But the ice will soon freeze again, if it is not thawed by the breath of the Spirit. And convictions not wrought by Him will pass away like the morning dew.

Reader, can the man who never feels the burden of his sins, and knows not what it is to be humbled by the thought of them,—can he have the Spirit? Judge for yourself.

5. All who have the Spirit, *are led by Him to Christ for salvation*. It is one special part of His office to “testify of Christ,” to “take of the things of Christ, and to show them to us.” (John xv. 26. xvi. 15.) By nature we all think to work our own way to heaven. We fancy in our blindness that we can make our peace with God.—From this miserable blindness the Spirit delivers us. He shews us that in ourselves we are lost and hopeless, and that Christ is the only door by which we can enter heaven and be saved. He teaches us that nothing but the blood of Jesus can atone for sin, and that through His mediation alone, God can be just and the justifier of the ungodly. He reveals to us the exquisite fitness and suitableness to our souls of Christ’s salvation. He unfolds to us the beauty of the glorious doctrine of justification by simple faith. He sheds abroad on our hearts that mighty love of God which is in Christ Jesus. Just as the dove flies to the well-known cleft of the rock, so does the soul of him who has the Spirit, flee to Christ and rest on Him.

Reader, can he who knows nothing of faith in Christ, be said to have the Spirit? Judge for yourself.

6. All who have the Spirit, *are by Him made holy*. He is “the Spirit of holiness.” (Rom. i. 4.) When He

dwells in men, He makes them follow after love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, faith, patience, temperance. He makes it natural to them to count all God's commandments concerning all things to be right, and to hate every false way. Sin is no more pleasant to them. It is their sorrow when tempted by it. It is their shame when they are overtaken by it. Their desire is to be free from it altogether. Their happiest times are when they are enabled to walk most closely with God. Their saddest times are when they are furthest off from Him.

Reader, can those who do not even pretend to live strictly according to God's will, be said to have the Spirit? Judge for yourself.

7. All who have the Spirit, *are spiritually minded*. To use the words of the Apostle Paul, "They that are after the Spirit, mind the things of the Spirit." (Rom. viii. 5.) The general tone, tenor, and bias of their minds is in favour of spiritual things. They do not serve God by fits and starts, but habitually. They may be drawn aside by strong temptations; but the general tendency of their lives, ways, tastes, thoughts, and habits, is spiritual. You see it in the way they spend their leisure time, the company they love to keep, and their conduct in their own homes. And all is the result of the spiritual nature implanted in them by the Holy Ghost. Just as the caterpillar, when it becomes a butterfly, can no longer be content to crawl on earth, but will fly upwards and use its wings, so will the affections of the man who has the Spirit, be ever reaching upwards toward God.

Reader, can those whose minds are wholly intent on the things of this world, be said to have the Spirit? Judge for yourself.

8. All who have the Spirit *feel a conflict within them, between the old nature and the new.* The words of St. Paul are true, more or less, of all the children of God, "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." (Gal. v. 17.) They feel a holy principle within their breasts, which makes them delight in the law of God. (Rom. vii. 22.) But they feel another principle within, striving hard for the mastery, and struggling to drag them downwards and backwards. Some feel this conflict more than others. But all who have the Spirit, are acquainted with it. And it is a token for good. It is a proof that the strong man armed no longer reigns within, as he once did, with undisputed sway. The presence of the Holy Ghost may be known by inward warfare as well as by inward peace. He that has been taught to rest and hope in Christ, will always be one who fights and wars with sin.

Reader, can he who knows nothing of inward conflict, and is a servant to sin, the world, and his own self-will,—can he be said to have the Spirit? Judge for yourself.

9. All who have the Spirit, *love others who have the Spirit.* It is written of them by St. John, "We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren." (1 John iii. 14.) The more they see of the Holy Ghost in any one, the more dear he is to

them. They regard him as a member of the same family, a child of the same Father, a subject of the same King, and a fellow-traveller with themselves in a foreign country towards the same father-land. It is the glory of the Spirit to bring back something of that brotherly love which sin has so miserably chased out of the world. He makes men love one another for reasons which to the natural man are foolishness,—for the sake of a common Saviour, a common faith, a common service on earth, and the hope of a common home. He raises up friendships independent of blood, marriage, interest, business, or any worldly motive. He unites men by making them feel they are united to one great centre, Jesus Christ.

Reader, can he who finds no pleasure in the company of spiritually-minded persons, or even sneers at them as saints,—can he be said to have the Spirit? Judge for yourself.

10. All who have the Spirit, are *taught by Him to pray*. He is called in Scripture, “The Spirit of grace and supplication.” (Zech. xii. 10.) The elect of God are said to cry to Him night and day. (Luke xviii. 7.) They cannot help it. Their prayers may be poor, and weak, and wandering,—but pray they *must*. Something within them tells them they must speak with God and lay their wants before Him. Just as the infant will cry when it feels pain or hunger, because it is its nature, so will the new nature implanted by the Holy Ghost, oblige a man to pray. He has the Spirit of adoption, and he must cry, “Abba, Father.” (Gal. iv. 6.)

Reader, can the man who never prays at all, or is

content with saying a few formal heartless words,—can he be said to have the Spirit? For the last time I say, judge for yourself.

Such are the marks and signs by which I believe the presence of the Holy Ghost in a man may be discerned. I have set them down fairly as they appear to me to be laid before us in the Scriptures. I have endeavoured to exaggerate nothing, and to keep back nothing. I believe there are no true Christians in whom these marks may not be found. Some of them no doubt stand out more prominently in some, and others in others. My own experience is distinct and decided, that I never saw a truly godly person, even of the poorest and humblest classes, in whom, on close observation, all these marks might not be discovered.

I believe that marks such as these are the only safe evidences that we are travelling in the way that leads to everlasting life. I charge every one who desires to make his calling and election sure, to see that these marks are his own. There are high-flying professors of religion I know, who despise the mention of "marks," and call them "legal." I care nothing for their being called "legal," so long as I am satisfied they are "Scriptural." And with the Bible before me I give my opinion confidently, that he who is without these marks, is without the Spirit of God.

Show me a man who has these marks about him, and I acknowledge him as a child of God. He may be poor and lowly in this world. He may be vile in his own eyes and often doubt of his own salvation. But he has that within him, which only comes from above, and will

never be destroyed, even the work of the Holy Ghost. God is his, Christ is his. His name is already written in the book of life, and before long heaven will be his own.

Show me a man in whom these marks are not to be found, and I dare not acknowledge him to be a true Christian. I dare not as an honest man. I dare not as a lover of his soul. I dare not as a reader of the Bible. He may make a great religious profession. He may be learned, high in the world, and moral in his life. It is all nothing if he has not the Holy Ghost. He is without God, without Christ, without solid hopes, and unless he changes, will at length be without heaven.

And now, reader, let me finish this tract by a few practical remarks which arise naturally out of the matter which it contains.

Would you know, first of all, *what is your own immediate duty*, as soon as you have read these pages? Listen, and I will tell you.

You ought to examine yourself calmly by the question which forms its title. You ought to ask yourself seriously how it is with your soul. Look away, I beseech you, for a few minutes, to higher things than the things of earth, and more important things than the thing of time. Bear with me, while I ask you solemnly and affectionately, as one who desires your salvation,—Have you the Spirit?

Remember, I do not ask whether you think all I have been saying is true, and right, and good. I ask whether you yourself, who are reading these lines, have within you the Holy Spirit?

Remember, I do not ask whether you believe that the Holy Ghost is given to the Church of Christ, and that all who belong to the Church are within reach of His operations. I ask whether you yourself have the Spirit in your own heart?

Remember, I do not ask whether you sometimes feel strivings of conscience, and good desires fitting about within you. I ask whether you have really experienced the quickening and reviving work of the Spirit upon your heart?

Remember, I do not ask you to tell me the day or month when the Spirit began His work in you. Enough for me if fruit trees bear fruit, without inquiring the precise time when they were planted. But I do ask, Are you bringing forth any fruit of the Spirit?

Remember, I do not ask whether you are a perfect person, and never feel anything evil within. But I do ask gravely and seriously, whether you have about your heart and life the marks of the Spirit?

Reader, I hope you will not tell me you do not know what the marks of the Spirit are. I have described them plainly. I now repeat them briefly, and press them on your attention. 1. The Spirit quickens men's souls. 2. The Spirit teaches men's hearts. 3. The Spirit leads to the word. 4. The Spirit convinces of sin. 5. The Spirit draws to Christ. 6. The Spirit sanctifies. 7. The Spirit makes men spiritually-minded. 8. The Spirit produces inward conflict. 9. The Spirit makes men love the brethren. 10. The Spirit teaches to pray. These are the great marks of the Holy Ghost's presence. Put the question to your conscience like a

man,—Has the Spirit done anything of this kind for your soul?

Reader, I charge you not to lie down on your bed to-night without trying to answer my question. I summon you before you sleep to bring the matter to an issue. We stand at a critical period in the history of mankind. We live in an old, worn-out, sin-laden world. Who can tell what a day may bring forth? Have you the Spirit?

Would you know, in the next place, what is *the grand defect of the Christianity of our times*? Listen to me, and I will tell you.

The grand defect I speak of is simply this, that the Christianity of many people is not real Christianity at all. I know that such an opinion sounds hard and shockingly uncharitable. I cannot help that. I am satisfied that it is sadly true. I only want people's Christianity to be that of the Bible. But I doubt exceedingly in many cases whether it is so.

There are multitudes of English people, I believe, who go to church or chapel every Sunday merely as a form. Their fathers or mothers went, and so they go. It is the fashion of the country to go, and so they go. It is the custom to attend a religious service and hear a sermon, and so they go. But as to real, vital, saving religion, they neither know nor care anything about it. They can give no account of the distinctive doctrines of the Gospel. Justification, and regeneration, and sanctification, are words and names which they cannot explain. They may have a sort of vague idea that they ought to go to the Lord's table, and may be able to say a few vague words about Christ, but they have no

intelligent notion of the way of salvation. As to the Holy Ghost, they can scarcely say more about Him than that they have heard His name.

Now if any reader of these pages is convinced that his religion is such as I have described, I will only warn him affectionately to remember that such religion is utterly *useless*. It will neither save, comfort, satisfy, nor sanctify the soul. And the plain advice I give him is to change it for something better without delay. Remember my words. It will not do at the last.

Would you know, in the next place, *what truth in the Gospel we have most need to be jealous about in this day?* Listen, and I will tell you.

The truth about which I believe we ought to be jealous at present, is the truth about the work of the Holy Ghost. All truth no doubt is constantly assailed by Satan. I have no desire for a moment to exaggerate the office of the Spirit, and to exalt Him above the sun and centre of the Gospel, Jesus Christ. But I do believe that no truth in the present day is so frequently lost sight of, and so cunningly assailed, as the work of the Spirit. Some injure it by ignorant neglect. They can talk a little about Christ. They can tell you something about "the Saviour." But if you ask them about that inward work of the Spirit, which all who *really* know the Saviour experience, they have not a word to say.—Some injure the work of the Spirit by taking it all for granted. Membership of the church, participation of the sacraments, become their substitutes for conversion, and spiritual regeneration.—Some injure the work of the Spirit by confounding it with the

action of natural conscience. According to this low view, none but the most hardened and degraded of mankind are destitute of the Holy Ghost.—Against all such departures from the truth, let us watch and be on our guard. Let us beware of leaving the proportion of Gospel statements. Let our watchwords in the present day be,—No salvation without the inward work of the Spirit! No inward work of the Holy Spirit, unless it can be seen, felt, and known! No saving work of the Spirit which does not show itself in repentance towards God, and living faith towards Jesus Christ!

Would you know, in the next place, *the reason why we who are ministers of the Gospel never despair of any one who hears us, so long as he lives?* Listen, and I will tell you.

We never despair, because we believe the power of the Holy Ghost. We might well despair, when we look at our own performances. We are often sick of ourselves. We might well despair, when we look at some who belong to our congregations. They seem as hard and insensible as the nether mill-stone. But we remember the Holy Ghost, and what He has done. We remember the Holy Ghost, and consider that He has not changed. He can come down like fire and melt the hardest hearts. He can convert the worst man or woman among our hearers, and mould their whole character into a new shape. And so we preach on. We hope because of the Holy Ghost. Oh! that our hearers would understand that the progress of true religion depends not on might or on power, but on the

Lord's Spirit! Oh! that many of them would learn to lean less on ministers, and to pray more for the Holy Spirit! Oh! that all would learn to expect less from schools, and tracts, and ecclesiastical machinery, and, while using all means diligently, would seek more earnestly for the outpouring of the Spirit!

Would you know, in the next place, *what you ought to do, if your conscience tells you you have not the Spirit!* Listen, and I will tell you.

If you have not the Spirit, you ought to go at once to the Lord Jesus Christ in prayer, and beseech Him to have mercy on you and send you the Spirit. I have not the slightest sympathy with those who tell men to pray for the Holy Spirit in the first place, in order that they may go to Christ in the second place. I see no warrant of Scripture for saying so. I only see that if men feel they are needy, perishing sinners, they ought to apply first and foremost, straight and direct, to Jesus Christ. I see that He Himself says, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." (John vii. 37.) I know that it is written, "He hath received gifts for men, even for the rebellious, that the Lord God might dwell among them." (Psal. lxxviii. 18.) I know it is His special office to baptize with the Holy Ghost, and that "in Him all fulness dwells." I dare not pretend to be more systematic than the Bible. I believe that Christ is the meeting place between God and the soul, and my first advice to any one who wants the Spirit must always be, "*Go to Jesus, and tell your want to Him.*"

Furthermore I would say, if you have not the Spirit,

you must be diligent in attending those means of grace through which the Spirit works. You must regularly hear that word which is His sword. You must habitually attend those assemblies where His presence is promised. You must, in short, be found *in the way of the Spirit*, if you want the Spirit to do you good. Blind Bartimeus would never have received sight had he sat lazily at home, and not come forth to sit by the wayside. Zaccheus might never have seen Jesus and become a son of Abraham, if he had not ran before and climbed up into the sycamore tree. The Spirit is a loving and good Spirit. *But he who despises means of grace, resists the Holy Ghost.*

Reader, remember these two things. I firmly believe that no man ever acted honestly and perseveringly on these two pieces of advice, who did not, sooner or later, have the Spirit.

Would you know, in the next place, *what you ought to do if you stand in doubt about your own state, and cannot tell whether you have the Spirit?* Listen, and I will tell you.

If you stand in doubt whether you have the Spirit, you ought to examine calmly whether your doubts are well-founded. There are many true believers, I fear, who are destitute of any firm assurance as to their own state. Doubting is their life. I ask such persons to take their Bibles down, and consider quietly the grounds of their anxiety. I ask them to consider whence came their sense of sin, however feeble,—their love to Christ, however faint,—their desire after holiness, however weak,—their pleasure in the company of God's people,

—their inclination to prayer and the Word? Whence came these things? I say. Did they come from your own heart? Surely not! Nature bears no such fruit. Did they come from the devil? Surely not! Satan does not war against Satan. Whence then, I repeat, did these things come? I warn you to beware, lest you grieve the Holy Ghost by doubting the truth of His operations. I tell you it is high time for you to reflect whether you have not been expecting an inward perfection which you had no right to expect, and at the same time thanklessly undervaluing a real work which the Holy Ghost has actually wrought in your souls.

A great statesman once said, that if a foreigner visited England for the first time, with his eyes bandaged and his ears open,—hearing everything, but seeing nothing,—he might well suppose that England was on the road to ruin, so many are the murmurings of the English people. And yet if that same foreigner came to England with his ears stopped and his eyes open,—seeing everything and hearing nothing,—he would probably suppose that England was the most wealthy and flourishing country in the world, so many are the signs of prosperity that he would see.

Reader, I am often disposed to apply this remark to the case of doubting Christians. If I believed all they say of themselves, I should certainly think they were in a bad state. But when I see them living as they do,—hungering and thirsting after righteousness,—poor in spirit,—desiring holiness,—loving the name of Christ,—keeping up habits of Bible-reading and prayer,—when

I see these things, I cease to be afraid. I trust my eyes more than my ears. I see manifest marks of the Spirit's presence, and I only grieve that they should refuse to see them themselves. I see the devil robbing them of their peace, by instilling these doubts into their minds, and I mourn that they should injure themselves by believing him. Some professors, without controversy, may well doubt whether they have the Spirit, for they have no signs of grace about them. But many nurse up a habit of doubt in their minds for which they have no cause, and of which they ought to be ashamed.

Would you know, last of all, *what you ought to do, if you really have the Spirit?* Listen to me, and I will tell you.

If you have the Spirit, seek to be "filled with the Spirit." (Eph. v. 18.) Drink deep of the living waters. Do not be content with a little religion. Pray that the Spirit may fill every corner and chamber of your heart, and that not an inch of room may be left in it for the world and the devil.

If you have the Spirit, "grieve not the Spirit." (Ephes. iv. 30.) It is easy for believers to weaken their sense of His presence, and deprive themselves of His comfort. Little sins not mortified,—little bad habits of temper or of tongue not corrected,—little compliances with the world,—are all likely to offend the Holy Ghost. Oh! that believers would remember this! There is far more of heaven on earth to be enjoyed, than many of them attain to. And why do they not attain to it? They do not watch sufficiently over their daily ways,—

and so the Spirit's work is damped and hindered. Reader, the Spirit must be a *thoroughly sanctifying* Spirit if He is to be a comforter to your soul.

If you have the Spirit, labour to bring forth *all* "the fruits of the Spirit." (Gal. v. 22.) Read over the list which the apostle has drawn out, and see that no one of these fruits is neglected. Oh! that believers would seek for more "love," and more "joy!" Then would they do more good to all men. Then would they feel happier themselves. Then would they make religion more beautiful in the eyes of the world.

Reader, I commend the things that I have written to your serious attention. Join with me in praying that the Spirit may be poured out from on high more abundantly than He ever has been yet on the professing Church of Christ in your own country. Pray that He may be poured out on all believers at home and abroad, that they may be more united and more holy. Pray that He may be poured out on Jews, Mahometans, and heathen, that many more of them may be converted, before the end comes.

Pray that He may be poured out on Roman Catholics, and especially in Italy and Ireland. Pray that He may be poured out on your own nation, and that it may be spared the judgments it deserves. Pray that He may be poured out on all faithful ministers and missionaries, and that their numbers may be increased an hundred-fold.

Pray that He may be poured out on your own soul, that if you know not the truth, you may be taught to

know it,—and that if you know it, you may know it better.

Pray not least that He may be poured out on my soul, that I may be kept from falling, and that you and I may meet with joy at the Lord's appearing.

I remain,

Your affectionate Friend,

J. C. RYLE.

Rich and Poor.

LUKE XVI. 19—23.

“There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day :

“And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores,

“And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man’s table : moreover, the dogs came and licked his sores.

“And it came to pass that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom : the rich man also died, and was buried ;

“And in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.”

THERE are probably few readers of the Bible who are not familiar with the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. It is one of those passages of Scripture which leave an indelible impression on the mind. Like

the parable of the Prodigal Son, once read it is never forgotten.

The reason of this is clear and simple. The whole parable is a most vividly painted picture. The story, as it goes on, carries our senses with it with irresistible power. Instead of readers, we become lookers on. We are witnesses of all the events described. We see. We hear. We fancy we could almost touch. The rich man's banquet,—the purple,—the fine linen,—the gate,—the beggar lying by it,—the sores,—the dogs,—the crumbs,—the two deaths,—the rich man's burial,—the ministering angels,—the bosom of Abraham,—the rich man's fearful waking up,—the fire,—the gulf,—the hopeless remorse,—all, all stand out before our eyes in bold relief, and stamp themselves upon our minds. This is the perfection of language. This is the attainment of the famous Arabian standard, "He speaks the best who turns the ear into an eye."

But after all, it is one thing to admire the masterly composition of this parable, and quite another to receive the spiritual lessons it contains. The eye of the intellect can often see beauties while the heart remains asleep, and sees nothing at all. Hundreds read Pilgrim's Progress with deep interest, to whom the struggle for the celestial city is foolishness. Thousands are familiar with every word of the parable before us this day, who never consider how it comes home to their own case. Their conscience is deaf to the cry which ought to ring in their ears as they read, "Thou art the man." Their heart never turns to God with the solemn enquiry, "Lord, is this my picture?—Lord, is it I?"

Reader, I invite you this day to consider the leading truths which this parable is meant to teach us. I purposely omit to notice any part of it but that which stands at the head of this tract. May the Holy Ghost give you a teachable spirit, and an understanding heart, and so produce lasting impressions on your soul !

I. Observe, first of all, *how different are the conditions which God allots to different men.*

The Lord Jesus begins the parable by telling us of a rich man and a beggar. He says not a word in praise either of poverty or of riches. He describes the circumstances of a wealthy man and the circumstances of a poor man ; but neither condemns the temporal position of one, nor praises that of the other.

The contrast between the two men is painfully striking. Look on this picture, and on that.

Here is one who possessed abundance of this world's good things. "He was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day."

Here is another who has literally nothing. He is a friendless, diseased, half-starved pauper. "He lies at the rich man's gate full of sores," and begs for crumbs.

Both are children of Adam. Both came from the same dust, and belong to one family. Both are living in the same land and subjects of the same government. And yet how different is their condition !

But we must take heed that we do not draw lessons from the parable which it was never meant to teach. The rich are not always bad men, and do not always go to hell. The poor are not always good men, and do

not always go to heaven. We must not rush into the extreme of supposing that it is sinful to be rich. We must not run away with the idea that there is anything wicked in the difference of condition here described, and that God intended all men to be equal. There is nothing in our Lord Jesus Christ's words to warrant any such conclusion. He simply describes things as they are often seen in the world, and as we must expect to see them.

Universal equality is a very high-sounding expression, and a favourite idea with visionary men. Many in every age have disturbed society by stirring up the poor against the rich, and by preaching up the popular doctrine that all men ought to be equal. But so long as the world is under the present order of things, this universal equality cannot be attained. Those who declaim against the vast inequality of men's lots, will doubtless never be in want of hearers; but so long as human nature is what it is, this inequality cannot be prevented.

So long as some are wise and some are foolish,—some strong and some weak,—some healthy and some diseased;—so long as children reap the fruit of their parent's misconduct;—so long as sun, and rain, and heat, and cold, and wind, and waves, and drought, and blight, and storm, and tempest are beyond man's control,—so long there always will be some rich and some poor. All the political economy in the world will never make the poor altogether cease out of the land.

Take all the property in England by force this day, and divide it equally among the inhabitants. Give

every man above twenty years old an equal portion. Let all take share and share alike, and begin the world over again. Do this, and see where you would be at the end of fifty years. You would just have come round to the point where you began. You would just find things as unequal as before. Some would have worked and some would have been idle. Some would have been always careless and some always scheming. Some would have sold and others would have bought. Some would have wasted and others would have saved. And the end would be, that some would be rich and others poor.

Reader, do not listen to those vain and foolish talkers, who say that all men were meant to be equal. They might as well tell you that all men ought to be of the same height, weight, strength and cleverness,—or that all oak trees ought to be of the same shape and size,—or that all blades of grass ought to be of the same length.

Settle it in your mind that the main cause of all the suffering you see around you, is sin. Sin is the grand cause of the enormous luxury of the rich,—and the painful degradation of the poor,—of the heartless selfishness of the highest classes, and the helpless poverty of the lowest. Sin must be first cast out of the world. The hearts of all men must be renewed and sanctified. The devil must be bound. The Prince of Peace must come down and take His great power and reign. All this must be before there ever can be universal happiness, or the gulf be filled up which now divides the rich and the poor.

Beware of expecting a millennium to be brought about by any method of government, by any system of education, by any political party. Labour might and main to do good to all men. Pity your poorer brethren, and help every reasonable endeavour to raise them from their low estate. Slack not your hand from any endeavour to increase knowledge,—to promote morality,—to improve the temporal condition of the poor. But never, never forget that you live in a fallen world, that sin is all around you, and that the devil is abroad. And be very sure that the rich man and Lazarus are emblems of two classes which will always be in the world until the Lord comes.

II. Observe in the next place, that *a man's temporal condition is no test of the state of his soul.*

The rich man in the parable appears to have been the world's pattern of a prosperous man. If the life that now is were all, he seems to have had everything that heart could wish. We know that he was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day. We need not doubt that he had everything else which money could procure. The wisest of men had good cause for saying, "Money answereth all things." "The rich hath many friends." (Eccles. x. 19. Prov. xiv. 20.)

But who that reads the story through can fail to see that in the highest and best sense the rich man was pitifully *poor*? Take away the good things of this life, and he had nothing left,—nothing after death,—nothing beyond the grave, nothing in the world to come. With all his riches he had no treasure laid up in heaven.

With all his purple and fine linen he had no garment of righteousness. With all his boon companions he had no Friend and Advocate at God's right hand. With all his sumptuous fare he had never tasted the bread of life. With all his splendid palace he had no home in the eternal world. Without God, without Christ, without faith, without grace, without pardon, without holiness, he lives to himself for a few short years, and then goes down hopelessly into the pit. How hollow and unreal was all his prosperity! Reader, judge what I say,—
The rich man was very poor.

Lazarus appears to have been one who had literally nothing in the world. It is hard to conceive a case of greater misery and destitution than his. He had neither house, nor money, nor food, nor health, nor, in all probability, even clothes. His picture is one that can never be forgotten. He lay at the rich man's gate, covered with sores. He desired to be fed with the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table. Moreover, the dogs came and licked his sores. Verily the wise man might well say, "The poor is hated even of his neighbour." "The destruction of the poor is their poverty." (Prov. xiv. 20 : x. 15.)

But who that reads the parable to the end can fail to see that in the highest sense Lazarus was not poor but *rich*? He was a child of God. He was an heir of glory. He possessed durable riches and righteousness. His name was in the book of life. His place was prepared for him in heaven. He had the best of clothing,—the righteousness of a Saviour. He had the best of friends,—God Himself was his portion. He had the

best of food, he had meat to eat the world knew not of. And best of all he had these things for ever. They supported him in life. They did not leave him in the hour of death. They went with him beyond the grave. They were his to eternity. Surely in this point of view we may well say, not "poor Lazarus," but "rich Lazarus."

Reader, you would do well to measure all men by God's standard,—to measure them not by the amount of their income, but by the condition of their souls. When the Lord God looks down from heaven and sees the children of men, He takes no account of many things which are highly esteemed by the world. He looks not at men's money, or lands, or titles. He looks only at the state of their souls, and reckons them accordingly. Oh! that you would strive to do likewise! Oh! that you would value grace above titles, or intellect, or gold! Often, far too often, the only question asked about a man is, "How much is he worth?" It would be well for us all to remember that every man is pitifully poor, until he is rich in faith, and rich toward God.

Wonderful as it may seem to some, all the money in the world is worthless in God's balances compared to grace! Hard as the saying may sound, I believe that a converted beggar is far more important and honourable in the sight of God than an unconverted king. The one may glitter like the butterfly in the sun for a little season, and be admired by an ignorant world; but his latter end is darkness, and misery for ever. The other may crawl through the world like a crushed worm, and be despised by every one who sees him; but

his latter end is a glorious resurrection and a blessed eternity with Christ. Of him the Lord says, "I know thy poverty, but thou art rich." (Rev. ii. 9.)

King Ahab was ruler over the ten tribes of Israel. Obadiah was nothing more than a servant in his household. Yet who can doubt which was most precious in God's sight, the servant or the king?

Ridley and Latimer were deposed from all their dignities, cast into prison as malefactors, and at length burnt at the stake. Bonner and Gardiner, their persecutors, were raised to the highest pitch of ecclesiastical greatness, enjoyed large incomes, and died unmolested in their beds. Yet who can doubt which of the two parties was on the Lord's side?

Baxter, the famous divine, was persecuted with savage malignity, and condemned to a long imprisonment by a most unjust judgment. Jeffreys, the Lord Chief Justice, was a man of infamous character, without either morality or religion. Baxter was sent to jail and Jeffreys was loaded with honours. Yet who can doubt which was the good man of the two, the Lord Chief Justice or the author of the "Saint's Rest?"

Reader, be very sure that riches and worldly greatness are no certain marks of God's favour. They are often on the contrary, a snare and hindrance to a man's soul. They make him love the world and forget God. What says Solomon? "Labour not to be rich." (Prov. xxiii. 4.) What says St. Paul? "They that *will* be rich, fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition." (1 Tim. vi. 9.)

Reader, be no less sure that poverty and trial are no certain proof of God's anger. They are blessings in disguise. They are always sent in love and wisdom. They often serve to wean man from the world. They teach him to set his affections on things above. They often show the sinner his own heart. They often make the saint fruitful in good works. What says the book of Job? "Happy is the man whom God correcteth; therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty." (Job. v. 17.) What says St. Paul? "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth." (Heb. xii. 6.)

One great secret of happiness in this life is to be of a patient, contented spirit. Strive daily to realize the truth that this life is not the place of reward. The time of retribution and recompense is yet to come. Judge nothing hastily before that time. Remember the words of the wise man, "If thou seest the oppression of the poor, and violent perverting of judgment and justice in a province, marvel not at the matter: for he that is higher than the highest regardeth, and there be higher than they." (Eccles. v. 8.) Yes! there is a day of judgment yet to come. That day shall put all in their right places. At last there shall be seen a mighty difference between him that feareth God, and him that feareth him not. The children of Lazarus and the children of the rich man, shall at length be seen in their true colours, and every one shall receive according to his works.

III. Observe, in the next place, how *all classes alike come to the grave.*

The rich man in the parable died, and Lazarus died also. Different and divided as they were in their lives, they had both to drink of the same cup at the last. Both went to the house appointed for all living. Both went to that place where rich and poor meet together. Dust they were, and unto dust they returned.

This is the lot of all men. It will be our own unless the Lord shall first return in glory. After all our scheming, and contriving, and planning, and studying, —after all our inventions, and discoveries, and scientific attainments,—there remains one enemy we cannot conquer and disarm, and that is death. The chapter in Genesis, which records the long lives of Methuselah and the rest who lived before the flood, winds up the simple story of each by two expressive words, "he died." And now, after 4,800 years, what more can be said of the greatest among ourselves? The histories of Marlborough, and Washington, and Napoleon, and Wellington arrive at just the same humbling conclusion. The end of each, after all his greatness, is just this, "he died."

Death is a mighty leveller. He spares none, he waits for none, and stands on no ceremony. He will not tarry till you are ready. He will not be kept out by moats, and doors, and bars, and bolts. The Englishman boast that his home is his castle, but with all his boasting, he cannot exclude death. An Austrian nobleman forbade death and the small pox to be named in his presence. But, named or not named, it matters little, in God's appointed hour death will come.

One man rolls easily along the road in the easiest and handsomest carriage that money can procure. Another

toils wearily along the path on foot. Yet both are sure to meet at last in the same home.

One man, like Absalom, has fifty servants to wait upon him and do his bidding. Another has none to lift a finger to do him a service. But both are travelling to a place where they must lie down alone.

One man is the owner of hundreds of thousands. Another has scarce a shilling that he can call his own property. Yet neither one nor the other can carry one farthing with him into the unseen world.

One man is the possessor of half a county. Another has not so much as a garden of herbs. And yet two paces of the vilest earth will be amply sufficient for either of them at the last.

One man pampers his body with every possible delicacy, and clothes it in the richest and softest apparel. Another has scarce enough to eat, and seldom enough to put on. Yet both alike are hurrying on to a day when "ashes to ashes, and dust to dust," shall be proclaimed over them, and fifty years hence none shall be able to say, "this was the rich man's bone and this the bone of the poor."

Reader, I know that these are ancient things. I do not deny it for a moment. I am writing stale old things that all men *know*. But I am also writing things that all men do not *feel*. Oh! no! if they did feel them, they would not speak and act as they do.

You wonder sometimes at the tone and language of ministers of the Gospel. You marvel that we press upon you immediate decision. You think us extreme and extravagant, and ultra in our views, because we

urge upon you to close with Christ,—to leave nothing uncertain,—to make sure that you are born again and ready for heaven. You hear, but do not approve. You go away, and say to one another: “The man means well, but he goes too far.”

But do you not see that the reality of death is continually forbidding us to use other language? We see him gradually thinning our congregations. We miss face after face in our assemblies. We know not whose turn may come next. We only know that as the tree falls there it will lie, and that “after death comes the judgment.” We *must* be bold and decided, and uncompromising in our language. We would rather run the risk of offending some, than of losing any. We would aim at the standard set up by old Baxter,—

“I’ll preach as though I ne’er should preach again,
And as a dying man to dying men!”

We would realize the character given by Charles II, of one of his preachers: “That man preaches as though death was behind his back. When I hear him I cannot go to sleep.”

Oh! that men would learn to live as those who may one day die! Truly it is poor work to set our affections on a dying world and its shortlived comforts, and for the sake of an inch of time to lose a glorious immortality! Here we are toiling, and labouring, and wearying ourselves about trifles, and running to and fro like ants upon a heap; and yet after a few years we shall all be gone, and another generation will fill our place. Live for eternity, reader. Seek a portion that can never be taken

from you. And never forget John Bunyan's golden rule, "He that would live well, let him make his dying day his company-keeper."

IV. Observe, in the next place, *how precious a believer's soul is in the sight of God.*

The rich man, in the parable, dies and is buried. Perhaps he had a splendid funeral,—a funeral proportioned to his expenditure while he was yet alive. But we hear nothing further of the moment when soul and body were divided. The next thing we hear of is that he is *in hell!*

The poor man, in the parable, dies also. What manner of burial he had we know not. A pauper's funeral among ourselves is a melancholy business. The funeral of Lazarus was probably no better. But this we do know, that the moment Lazarus dies he is carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom,—carried to a place of rest, where all the faithful are waiting for the resurrection of the just.

Reader, there is something to my mind very striking, very touching, and very comforting in this expression of the parable. I ask your especial attention to it. It throws great light on the relation of all sinners of mankind who believe in Christ, to their God and Father. It shows a little of the care bestowed on the least and low-est of Christ's disciples, by the King of kings.

No man has such friends and attendants as the believer, however little he may think it. Angels rejoice over him in the day that he is born again of the Spirit. Angels minister to him all through life. Angels encamp around him in the wilderness of this world. Angels take charge

of his soul in death, and bear it safely home. Yes! vile as he may be in his own eyes, and lowly in his own sight, the very poorest and humblest believer in Jesus is cared for by his Father in heaven, with a care that passeth knowledge. The Lord has become his Shepherd, and he can want nothing. Only let a man come unfeignedly to Christ, and he shall have all the benefits of a covenant ordered in all things and sure.

Is he laden with many sins? Though they be as scarlet, they shall become white as snow.

Is his heart hard and prone to evil? A new heart shall be given to him, and a new spirit put in him.

Is he weak and cowardly? He that enabled Peter to confess Christ before His enemies, shall make him bold.

Is he ignorant? He that bore with Thomas' slowness, shall bear with him, and guide him into all truth.

Is he alone in his position? He that stood by Paul when all men forsook him, shall also stand by his side.

Is he in circumstances of special trial? He that enabled men to be saints in Nero's household, shall also enable him to persevere.

The very hairs of his head are all numbered. Nothing can harm him without God's permission. He that hurteth him, hurteth the apple of God's eye, and injures a brother and member of Christ Himself.

His trials are all wisely ordered. Satan can only vex him as he did Job, when God permits him. No temptation can happen to him above what he is able to bear. All things are working together for his good.

His steps are all ordered from grace to glory. He is kept on earth till he is ripe for heaven, and not one mo-

ment longer. The harvest of the Lord must have its appointed proportion of sun and wind, of cold and heat, of rain and storm. And then when the believer's work is done, the angels of God shall come for him as they did for Lazarus, and carry him safe home.

Ah! reader, the men of the world little think whom they are despising, when they mock Christ's people. They are mocking those whom angels are not ashamed to attend upon. They are mocking the brethren and sisters of Christ Himself. Little do they consider that these are they for whose sakes the days of tribulation are shortened. These are they by whose intercession kings reign peacefully. Little do they reckon, that the prayers of men like Lazarus have more weight in the affairs of nations, than hosts of armed men.

Believers in Christ who read these pages, you little know the full extent of your privileges and possessions. Like children at school, you know not half your Father is doing for your welfare. Learn to live by faith more than you have done. Acquaint yourselves with the fulness of the treasure laid up for you in Christ even now. This world, no doubt, must always be a place of trial while we are in the body. But still there are comforts provided for the brethren of Lazarus, which many never enjoy.

V. Observe, in the last place, *what a dangerous and soul-ruining sin is the sin of selfishness.*

You leave the rich man in the parable, in a hopeless state. If there was no other picture of a lost soul in hell in all the Bible, you have it here. You meet him in

the beginning, clothed in purple and fine linen. You part with him at the last, tormented in the everlasting fire.

And yet there is nothing to show that this man was a murderer, or a thief, or an adulterer, or a liar. There is no reason to say that he was an atheist, or an infidel, or a blasphemer. For anything we know, he attended to all the ordinances of the Jewish religion. But we do know that he was lost for ever.

There is something to my mind very solemn in this thought. Here is a man whose outward life in all probability was correct. At all events we know nothing against him. He dresses richly; but then he had money to spend on his apparel. He gives splendid feasts and entertainments; but then he was wealthy, and could well afford it. We read nothing recorded against him that might not be recorded of hundreds and thousands in the present day, who are counted respectable and good sort of people. And yet the end of this man is that he goes to hell. Surely this deserves serious attention.

I believe it is meant to teach us *to beware of living only for ourselves*. It is not enough that we are able to say, "I live correctly. I pay every one his due. I discharge all the relations of life with propriety. I attend to all the outward requirements of Christianity." There remains behind another question, to which the Bible requires an answer. "To whom do you live, to yourself or to Christ? What is the great end, aim, object, and ruling motive in your life?" Let men call the question extreme if they please. For myself, I can find nothing short of this in St. Paul's words, "He

died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again." (2 Cor. v. 15.) And I draw the conclusion that if, like the rich man, we live only to ourselves, we shall ruin our souls.

I believe further, that this passage is meant to teach us *the damnable nature of sins of omission*. It does not seem that it was so much the things the rich man did, but the things he left undone, which made him miss heaven. Lazarus was at his gate and he let him alone. But is not this exactly in keeping with the history of the judgment in the twenty-fifth of St. Matthew? Nothing is said there of the sins of commission, of which the lost are guilty. How runs the charge?—"I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not." (Matt. xxv. 42, 43.) The charge against them is simply that they did not do certain things. On this their sentence turns. And I draw the conclusion again, that except we take heed, sins of omission may ruin our souls. Truly it was a solemn saying of good Archbishop Usher on his death-bed, "Lord, forgive me all my sins, but specially my sins of omission."

I believe further, that the passage is meant to teach us that *riches bring special danger with them*. Yes! riches, which the vast majority of men are always seeking after,—riches for which they spend their lives, and of which they make an idol,—riches entail on their possessor immense spiritual peril! The possession of

them has a very hardening effect on the soul. They chill. They freeze. They petrify the inward man. They close the eye to the things of faith. They insensibly produce a tendency to forget God.

And does not this stand in perfect harmony with all the language of Scripture on the same subject? What says our Lord? "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God!" (Mark x. 23, 25.) What says St. Paul? "The love of money is the root of all evil; which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." (1 Tim. vi. 10.) What can be more striking than the fact that the Bible has frequently spoken of money as a most fruitful cause of sin and evil? For money Achan brought defeat on the armies of Israel, and death on himself. For money Balaam sinned against light, and tried to curse God's people. For money Delilah betrayed Samson to the Philistines. For money Gehazi lied to Naaman and Elisha, and became a leper. For money Ananias and Sapphira became the first hypocrites in the early church, and lost their lives. For money Judas Iscariot sold Christ, and was ruined eternally. Surely these facts speak loudly.

Money, in truth, is one of the most *unsatisfying* of possessions. It takes away some cares, no doubt. But it brings with it quite as many cares as it takes away. There is trouble in the getting of it. There is anxiety in the keeping of it. There are temptations in the use

of it. There is guilt in the abuse of it. There is sorrow in the losing of it. There is perplexity in the disposing of it. Two-thirds of all the strifes, quarrels, and lawsuits in the world, arise from one simple cause, —*money!*

Money most certainly is one of the most *ensnaring and heart-changing* of possessions. It seems desirable at a distance. It often proves a poison when in our hand. No man can possibly tell the effect of money on his soul, if it suddenly falls to his lot to possess it. Many an one did run well as a poor man, who forgets God when he is rich.

Reader, I draw the conclusion, that those who have money, like the rich man in the parable, ought to take double pains about their souls. They live in a most unhealthy atmosphere. They have double need to be on their guard.

I believe, not least, that the passage is meant *to stir up special carefulness about selfishness in these last days*. You have a special warning in 2 Tim. iii. 1, 2. "In the last days perilous times shall come: For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous." I believe we have come to the last days, and that we ought to beware of the sins here mentioned, if we love our souls.

Perhaps we are poor judges of our own times. We are apt to exaggerate and magnify their evils, just because we see and feel them. But after every allowance, I doubt whether there ever was more need of warnings against selfishness than in the present day. I am sure there never was a time when all classes in England had so many comforts and so many temporal good things.

And yet I believe there is an utter disproportion between men's expenditure on themselves and their outlay on works of charity and works of mercy. I see this in the miserable one guinea subscriptions to which many rich men confine their charity. I see it in the languishing condition of many of our best religious societies, and the painfully slow growth of their annual incomes. I see it in the small number of names which appear in the list of contributions to any good work. There are, I believe, thousands of rich people in this country, who literally give away nothing at all. I see it in the notorious fact that few, even of those who give, give anything proportioned to their means. I see all this, and mourn over it. I regard it as the selfishness and covetousness predicted as likely to arise in the last days.

Reader, I know that this is a painful and delicate subject. But it must not on that account be avoided by the minister of Christ. It is a subject for the times, and it needs pressing home. I desire to speak to myself, and to all who make any profession of religion. Of course I cannot expect worldly and utterly ungodly persons to view this subject in Bible light. To them the Bible is no rule of faith and practice. To quote texts to them would be of little use.

But I do ask all professing Christians to consider well what Scripture says against covetousness and selfishness, and on behalf of liberality in giving money. Is it for nothing that the Lord Jesus spoke the parable of the rich fool, and blamed him because he was not "rich towards God?" (Luke xii. 21.) Is it for nothing

that in the parable of the sower He mentions the deceitfulness of riches as one reason why the seed of the Word bears no fruit? (Matt. xiii. 22.) Is it for nothing that He says, "Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness?" (Luke xvi. 9.) Is it for nothing that He says, "When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbours; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: and thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just?" (Luke xiv. 14.) Is it for nothing that He says, "Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth!" (Luke xii. 33.) Is it for nothing that He says, "it is more blessed to give than to receive?" (Acts xx. 35.) Is it for nothing that He warns us against the example of the priest and Levite, who saw the wounded traveller, but passed by on the other side? Is it for nothing that He praises the good Samaritan, who denied himself to show kindness to a stranger? (Luke x. 34.) Is it for nothing that St. Paul classes covetousness with sins of the grossest description, and denounces it as idolatry? (Coloss. iii. 5.) And is there not a striking and painful difference between this language and the habits and feelings of society about money? I appeal to any one who knows the world. Let him judge what I say.

Reader, I only ask you to consider calmly the passages of Scripture to which I have referred. I cannot think they were meant to teach nothing at all. That the habits of the East and our own are different, I freely allow. That some of the expressions I have quoted are figurative, I freely admit. But still after all, a principle lies at the bottom of all these expressions. Let us take heed that this principle is not neglected. I wish that many a professing Christian in this day, who perhaps dislikes what I am saying, would try to write a commentary on these expressions, and try to explain to himself what they mean.


To know that alms-giving cannot atone for sin is well. To know that our good works cannot justify us is excellent. To know that we may give all our goods to feed the poor, and build hospitals and cathedrals, without any real charity, is most important. But let us beware lest we go into the other extreme, and because our money cannot save us, give away no money at all.

Has any one money who reads these pages? Then take heed and beware of covetousness. Remember you carry weight in the race towards heaven. All men are naturally in danger of being lost for ever, but you are doubly so because of your possessions. Nothing is said to put out fire so soon as earth thrown upon it. Nothing I am sure, has such a tendency to quench the fire of religion as the possession of money. It was a solemn message which Buchanan, on his death-bed, sent to his old pupil, James I., "He was going to a place where few kings and great men would come." It is possible,

no doubt, for you to be saved as well as others. With God nothing is impossible. Abraham, Job, and David were all rich and yet saved. But Oh! take heed to yourself. Money is a good servant, but a bad master. Let that saying of our Lord's sink down into your heart, "How hardly shall a rich man enter into the kingdom of God." Well said an old divine, "The surface above gold mines is generally very barren." Well might old Latimer begin one of his sermons before Edward the VI. by quoting three times over our Lord's words, "Take heed and beware of covetousness," and then saying, "What if I should say nothing else these three or four hours?" There are few prayers in our Litany more wise and more necessary than that petition, "In all time of our *wealth*, good Lord deliver us."

Has any one little or no money who reads these pages? Then do not envy those who are richer than yourself. Pray for them. Pity them. Be charitable to their faults. Remember that high places are giddy places, and be not too hasty in your condemnation of their conduct. Perhaps if you had their difficulties you would do no better yourself. Beware of the love of money. A man may love money overmuch without having any at all. Beware of the love of self. It may be found in a cottage as well as in a palace. And beware of thinking that poverty alone will save you. If you would sit with Lazarus in glory, you must not only have fellowship with him in suffering but in grace.

Does any reader desire to know the remedy against that love of self, which ruined the rich man's soul, and cleaves to us all by nature like our skin? I tell him



plainly there is only one remedy, and I ask him to mark well what that remedy is. It is not the fear of hell. It is not the hope of heaven. It is not any sense of duty. Oh ! no ! The disease of selfishness is far too deeply rooted to yield to such secondary motives as these. Nothing will ever cure it but an experimental knowledge of Christ's redeeming love. You must know the misery and guilt of your own estate by nature. You must experience the power of Christ's atoning blood sprinkled upon your conscience, and making you whole. You must taste the sweetness of peace with God through the mediation of Jesus, and feel the love of a reconciled Father shed abroad in your heart by the Holy Ghost.

Then, and not till then, the mainspring of selfishness will be broken. *Then*, knowing the immensity of your debt to Christ, you will feel that nothing is too great and too costly to give to him. Feeling that you have been loved much when you deserved nothing, you will heartily love in return, and cry, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits?" Feeling that you have freely received countless mercies, you will think it a privilege to do anything to please Him to whom you owe all. Feeling that you have been bought with a price, and are no longer your own, you will labour to glorify God with body and spirit, which are His.

Yes ! reader, I repeat it this day. I know no *effectual* remedy for the love of self, but a believing apprehension of the love of Christ. Other remedies may palliate the disease : this alone will heal it. Other antidotes may hide its deformity : this alone will work a perfect cure.


An easy, good-natured temper may cover over

selfishness in one man. A love of praise may conceal it in a second. A self-righteous asceticism and an affected spirit of self-denial may keep it out of sight in a third. But nothing will ever cut up selfishness by the roots but the love of Christ revealed to the mind by the Holy Ghost, and felt in the heart by simple faith. Once let a man see the full meaning of the words, "Christ loved me and gave himself for me," and then he will delight to give himself to Christ, and all that he has to His service. He will live to Him, not in order that he may be secure, but because he is secure already. He will work for Him, not that he may have life and peace, but because life and peace are his already.

Go to the cross of Christ, all you that want to be delivered from the power of selfishness. Go and see what a price was paid there to provide a ransom for your soul. Go and see what an astounding sacrifice was there made that a door to eternal life might be provided for poor sinners like you. Go and see how the Son of God gave Himself for you, and learn to think it a small thing to give yourself to Him.

Reader, the disease which ruined the rich man in the parable may be cured. But oh! remember, there is only one real remedy. If you would not live to yourself, you must live to Christ. See to it that this remedy is not only known, but applied,—not only heard of, but used.

1. And now let me conclude all *by urging on every reader of these pages, the great duty of self-inquiry.* A passage of Scripture like this parable ought surely to



raise in many an one great searchings of heart.—“What am I? Where am I going? What am I doing? What is likely to be my condition after death? Am I prepared to leave the world? Have I any home to look forward to in the world to come? Have I put off the old man and put on the new? Am I really one with Christ, and a pardoned soul?” Surely such questions as these may well be asked when the story of the rich man and Lazarus has been heard. Oh! that the Holy Ghost may incline many a reader’s heart to ask them!

2. In the next place, *I invite* all readers who desire to have their souls saved, and have no good account to give of themselves at present, to seek salvation while it can be found. I do entreat you to apply to Him, by whom alone men can enter heaven, and be saved,—even Jesus Christ the Lord. He has the keys of heaven. He is sealed and appointed by God the Father to be the Saviour of all that will come to Him. Go to Him in earnest and hearty prayer and tell Him your case. Tell Him that you have heard that He receiveth sinners, and that you come to Him as such. Tell Him that you desire to be saved by Him in His own way, and ask Him to save you. Oh! that you may take this course without delay. Remember the hopeless end of the rich man. Once dead there is no more change.

3. Last of all, *I entreat* all professing Christians to encourage themselves in habits of liberality towards all causes of charity and mercy. Remember that you are God’s stewards, and give money liberally, freely, and

without grudging, whenever you have an opportunity. You cannot keep your money for ever. You must give account one day of the manner in which it has been expended. Oh! lay it out with an eye to eternity, while you can.

I do not ask rich men to leave their situations in life and go into the work-house. I ask no man to neglect his worldly calling, and to omit to provide for his family. Diligence in business is a positive Christian duty. Provision for those dependent on us, is proper Christian prudence. But I ask all to look around continually, as they journey on, and to remember the poor,—the poor in body, and the poor in soul. Here we are for a few short years. How can we do most good with our money, while we are here? How can we so spend it as to leave the world somewhat happier and somewhat holier when we are removed? Might we not abridge some of our luxuries? Might we not lay out less upon ourselves, and give more to Christ's cause and Christ's poor? Is there none we can do good to? Are there no sick, no poor, no needy whose sorrows we might lessen, and whose comforts we might increase? Such questions will never fail to elicit an answer from some quarter. I am thoroughly persuaded that the income of every religious and charitable society in England might easily be multiplied tenfold, if English Christians would give in proportion to their means.

There are none surely to whom such appeals ought to come home with such power as professing believers in the Lord Jesus. The parable of the text is a striking illustration of our position by nature, and our debt to

Christ. We all lay, like Lazarus, at heaven's gate, sick unto the death, helpless, and starving. Blessed be God! we were not neglected as he was. Jesus came forth to relieve us. Jesus gave Himself for us, that we might have hope and live. For a poor Lazarus-like world He came down from heaven, and humbled Himself to become a man. For a poor Lazarus-like world He went up and down doing good, caring for men's bodies as well as souls, until He died for us on the cross.

I believe that in giving to support works of charity and mercy, we are doing that which is according to Christ's mind,—and I ask readers of these pages to begin the habit of giving, if they never began it before; and to go on with it increasingly, if they have begun.

I believe that in offering a warning against covetousness, I have done no more than bring forward a warning specially called for by the times, and I ask God to bless the consideration of these pages to many souls.

I remain,

Your affectionate Friend,

J. C. RYLE.

Peace! be Still!

MARK IV. 37—40.

“And there arose a great storm of wind, and the waves beat into the ship, so that it was now full.

“And he was in the hinder part of the ship asleep on a pillow : and they awake him, and say unto him, Master, carest thou not that we perish ?

“And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm.

“And he said unto them, Why are ye so fearful ? How is it that ye have no faith ?

READER,

I wish professing Christians in this day studied the four Gospels more than they do. I know that all Scripture is profitable,—I do not wish to exalt one part of the Bible at the expense of another. But I think it would be good for some who are very familiar with the

Epistles of the New Testament, if they knew a little more about Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

Now why do I say this? I say it because I want professing Christians to know more about Christ. It is well to be acquainted with all the doctrines and principles of Christianity. It is better to be acquainted with Christ Himself. It is well to be familiar with faith, and grace, and justification, and sanctification. They are all matters pertaining to the King. But it is far better to be familiar with Jesus Himself, to see the King's own face and to behold His beauty.

Now the Gospels were written to make us acquainted with Christ. The Holy Ghost has told us the story of His life and death, His sayings and His doings, four times over. Four different inspired hands have drawn the picture of the Saviour. His ways, His manners, His feelings, His wisdom, His grace, His patience, His love, His power, are graciously unfolded to us by four different witnesses. Ought not the sheep to be familiar with the Shepherd? Ought not the patient to be familiar with the Physician? Ought not the bride to be familiar with the Bridegroom? Ought not the sinner to be familiar with the Saviour? Beyond doubt it ought to be so. The Gospels were written to make men familiar with Christ, and therefore I wish men to study the Gospels.


On whom must you and I build our souls if we would be accepted with God? We must build on *the rock*, Christ. From whom must you and I draw that grace of the Spirit which we daily need in order to be fruitful? We must draw from *the vine*, Christ. To whom must

we look for sympathy when earthly friends fail us or die? We must look to our elder *brother*, Christ. By whom must our prayers be presented if they are to be heard on high? They must be presented by our *advocate*, Christ. With whom do we hope to spend the thousand years of glory and the after eternity? With *the King* of kings, Christ. Surely we cannot know this Christ too well. Surely there is not a word, nor a deed, nor a day, nor a step, nor a thought in the record of His life, which ought not to be precious to us. We should labour to be familiar with every line that is written about Jesus.

Come now, and let us study together a page in our Master's history. Let us consider what we may learn from the verses of Scripture which stand at the head of these pages. You see Jesus there crossing the Lake of Galilee in a boat with His disciples. You see a sudden storm arise while He is asleep. The waves beat into the boat, and fill it. Death seems to be close at hand. The frightened disciples awake their Master and cry for help. He arises and rebukes the wind and waves, and at once there is a calm. He mildly reproves the faithless fear of His companions, and all is over. Such is the picture. It is one full of deep instruction. Come now, and let us examine what we are meant to learn.

I. Learn first of all, that *following Christ will not prevent your having sorrows and troubles on earth.*

Here are the chosen disciples of the Lord Jesus in great anxiety. The faithful little flock which believed when Priests, and Scribes, and Pharisees were all alike



unbelieving, is allowed by the Shepherd to be disquieted. The fear of death breaks in upon them like an armed man. The deep water seems likely to go over their souls. Peter, James and John, the pillars of the Church about to be planted in the world, are much distressed.

Perhaps they had not reckoned on all this. Perhaps they had expected that Christ's service would at any rate lift them above the reach of earthly trials. Perhaps they thought that He who could raise the dead, and heal the sick, and feed multitudes with a few loaves, and cast out devils with a word,—He would never allow His servants to be sufferers upon earth. Perhaps they had supposed He would always grant them smooth journeys, fine weather, an easy course, and freedom from trouble and care.

If the disciples thought so they were much mistaken. The Lord Jesus taught them that a man may be one of His chosen servants, and yet have to go through many an anxiety, and endure many a pain.

Reader, it is good to understand this clearly. It is good to understand that Christ's service never did secure a man from all the ills that flesh is heir to, and never will. If you are a believer, you must reckon on having your share of sickness and pain, of sorrow and tears, of losses and crosses, of deaths and bereavements, of partings and separations, of vexations and disappointments, so long as you are in the body. Christ never undertakes that you shall get to heaven without these. He has undertaken that all who come to Him shall have all things pertaining to life and godliness. But He has

never undertaken that He will make them prosperous, rich, or healthy, and that death shall never come to their family.

I have the privilege of being one of Christ's ambassadors. In His name I can offer eternal life to any man, woman or child who is willing to have it. In His name I do offer pardon, peace, grace, glory, to any son or daughter of Adam who reads these pages. But I dare not offer that person worldly prosperity as a part and parcel of the Gospel. I dare not offer him long life, an increased income, and freedom from pain. I dare not promise the man who takes up the cross and follows Christ, that in the following he shall never meet with a storm.

I know well that many do not like these terms. They would prefer having Christ and good health,—Christ and plenty of money,—Christ and no deaths in their family,—Christ and no wearing cares,—Christ and a perpetual morning without clouds. But they do not like Christ and the cross,—Christ and tribulation,—Christ and the conflict,—Christ and the howling wind,—Christ and the storm.

Reader, is this the thought of your heart? Believe me, if it is, you are very wrong. Listen to me, and I will try to shew you you have yet much to learn.

How should we know who are true Christians, if following Christ was the way to be free from trouble? How should we discern the wheat from the chaff, if it were not for the winnowing of trial? How should we know whether men served Christ for His own sake or from selfish motives, if His service brought health

and wealth with it as a matter of course? The winds of winter soon shew us which of the trees are ever-green and which are not. The storms of affliction and care are useful in the same way. They discover whose faith is real, and whose is nothing but profession and form.

How would the great work of sanctification go on in a man, if he had no trial? Trouble is often the only fire which will burn away the dross that clings to our hearts. Trouble is the pruning-knife which the great Husbandman employs in order to make us fruitful in good works. The harvest of the Lord's field is seldom ripened by sunshine only. It must go through its days of wind, and rain, and storm.

Reader, if you desire to serve Christ and be saved, I entreat you to take the Lord on His own terms. Make up your mind to meet with your share of crosses and sorrows, and then you will not be surprised. For want of understanding this, many seem to run well for a season, and then turn back in disgust, and are cast away.

Reader, if you profess to be a child of God, leave to the Lord Jesus to sanctify you in His own way. Rest satisfied that He never makes any mistakes. Be sure that He does all things well. The winds may howl around you, and the waters swell. But fear not, "He is leading you by the right way, that He may bring you to a city of habitation." (Psalm cvii. 7.)

II. Learn in the second place, that the *Lord Jesus Christ is truly and really man.*

There are words used in this little history, which, like many other passages in the Gospels, bring out this truth in a very striking way. You are told that when the waves began to break on the ship, Jesus was in the hinder part, "asleep on a pillow." He was weary, and who can wonder at it, after reading the account given in the 4th of Mark. After labouring all day to do good to souls,—after preaching in the open air to vast multitudes, Jesus was fatigued. Surely if the sleep of the labouring man is sweet, much more sweet must have been the sleep of our blessed Lord !

Reader, I ask you to settle deeply in your mind this great truth, that Jesus Christ was verily and indeed man. He was equal to the Father in all things, and the eternal God. But He was also man, and took part of flesh and blood, and was made like unto us in all things, sin only excepted. He had a body like our own. Like us, He was born of a woman. Like us, He grew and increased in stature. Like us He was often hungry and thirsty, and faint and weary. Like us, He ate and drank, rested and slept. Like us, He sorrowed and wept, and felt. It is all very wonderful, but so it is. He that made the heavens, went to and fro as a poor weary man on earth ! He that ruled over principalities and powers in heavenly places, took on Him a frail body like our own. He that might have dwelt for ever in the glory which He had with the Father, amidst the praises of legions of angels came down to earth and dwelt as a man among sinful men. Surely this fact alone is an amazing miracle of condescension, grace, pity, and love.

I find a deep mine of comfort in this thought, that Jesus is perfect man no less than perfect God. He in whom I am told by Scripture to trust, is not only a great High Priest, but a feeling High Priest. He is not only a powerful Saviour, but a sympathizing Saviour. He is not only the Son of God mighty to save, but the Son of man able to feel.

Who does not know that sympathy is one of the sweetest things left to us in this sinful world? It is one of the bright seasons in our dark journey here below, when we can find a person who enters into our troubles, and goes along with us in our anxieties,—who can weep when we weep, and rejoice when we rejoice.

Sympathy is far better than money, and far rarer too. Thousands can give who know not what it is to feel. Sympathy has the greatest power to draw us and to open our hearts. Proper and correct counsel often falls dead and useless on a heavy heart. Cold advice often makes us shut up, shrink, and withdraw into ourselves, when tendered in the day of trouble. But genuine sympathy in such a day will call out all our better feelings, if we have any, and obtain an influence over us when nothing else can. Give me the friend, who, though poor in gold and silver, has always ready a sympathizing heart.

Reader, our God knows all this well. He knows the very secrets of man's heart. He knows the ways by which that heart is most easily approached, and the springs by which that heart is most readily moved. He has wisely provided that the Saviour of the Gospel should be feeling as well as mighty. He has given us

one who has not only a strong hand to pluck us as brands from the burning, but a sympathizing heart, on which the labouring and heavy-laden may find rest.

I see a marvellous proof of love and wisdom in the union of two natures in Christ's person. It was marvellous love in our Saviour to condescend to go through weakness and humiliation for our sakes, ungodly rebels as we are. It was marvellous wisdom to fit Himself in this way to be the very Friend of friends, who could not only save man, but meet him on his own ground. I want one able to perform all things needful to redeem my soul. This Jesus can do, for He is the eternal Son of God.—I want one able to understand my weakness and infirmities, and to deal gently with my soul, while tied to a body of death. This again Jesus can do, for He was the Son of Man, and had flesh and blood like my own.—Had my Saviour been God only, I might perhaps have *trusted* Him, but I never could have come near to Him without fear. Had my Saviour been man only, I might have *loved* Him, but I never could have felt sure that He was able to take away my sins.—But, blessed be the Lord, my Saviour is God as well as man, and man as well as God,—God, and so able to deliver me,—man, and so able to feel with me. Almighty power and deepest sympathy are met together in one glorious person, Jesus Christ, my Lord. Surely a believer in Christ has a strong consolation. He may well trust, and not be afraid.

Reader, if you know what it is to go to the throne of grace for mercy and pardon, do not forget that the

Mediator by whom you draw near to God, is the Man Christ Jesus.

Your soul's business is in the hand of a High Priest who can be touched with the feeling of your infirmities. You have not to do with a being of so high and glorious a nature, that your mind can in no wise comprehend him. You have to do with Jesus, who had a body like your own, and was a man upon earth like yourself. He well knows that world through which you are struggling, for He dwelt in the midst of it thirty-three years. He well knows the contradiction of sinners, which so often discourages you, for He endured it Himself. He well knows the art and cunning of your spiritual enemy, the devil, for He wrestled with him in the wilderness. Surely with such an Advocate you may well feel bold.

Reader, if you know what it is to apply to the Lord Jesus for spiritual comfort in earthly troubles, you should well remember the days of His flesh, and His human nature.

You are applying to One who knows your feelings by experience, and has drunk deep of the bitter cup, for He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. Jesus knows the heart of a man,—the bodily pains of a man,—the difficulties of a man, for He was a man Himself, and had flesh and blood upon earth. He sat wearied by the well at Sychar. He wept over the grave of Lazarus, at Bethany. He sweat great drops of blood at Gethsemane. He groaned with anguish at Calvary. He is no stranger to your sensations. He is acquainted with everything that belongs to human nature, sin only excepted.

Are you poor and needy? So also was Jesus. The foxes had holes, and the birds of the air had nests, but the Son of Man had not where to lay his head. He dwelt in a despised city. Men used to say, "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" (John i. 46.) He was esteemed a carpenter's son. He preached in a borrowed boat, rode into Jerusalem on a borrowed ass, and was buried in a borrowed tomb.

Are you alone in the world, and neglected by those who ought to love you? So also was Jesus. He came unto His own, and they received Him not. He came to be a Messiah to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, and they rejected Him. The princes of this world would not acknowledge Him. The few that followed Him were publicans and fishermen. And even these at the last forsook Him, and were scattered every man to his own place.

Are you misunderstood, misrepresented, slandered, and persecuted? So also was Jesus. He was called a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of publicans, a Samaritan, a madman, and a devil. His character was belied. False charges were laid against Him. An unjust sentence was passed upon Him, and though innocent, He was condemned as a malefactor, and as such died on the cross.

Does Satan tempt you, and offer horrid suggestions to your mind? So also did he tempt Jesus. He bade Him to distrust God's fatherly providence, "Command these stones to be made bread." He proposed to Him to tempt God by exposing Himself to unnecessary danger, "Cast thyself down" from the pinnacle of the temple. He

suggested to Him to obtain the kingdoms of the world for His own by one little act of submission to himself, "All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me."

Do you ever feel great agony and conflict of mind? Do you feel in darkness, as if God had left you? So did Jesus. Who can tell the extent of the sufferings of mind He went through in the garden? Who can measure the depth of His soul's pain when He cried, "My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?"

Ah! reader, it is impossible to conceive a Saviour more suited to the wants of man's heart, than our Lord Jesus Christ,—suited not only by His power, but by His sympathy,—suited not only by His Divinity, but by His humanity. Labour, I beseech you, to get firmly impressed on your mind that Christ the refuge of souls is man as well as God. Honour Him as King of kings, and Lord of lords. But while you do this, never forget that He had a body, and was a man. Grasp this truth, and never let it go. The unhappy Socinian errs fearfully when he says that Christ was only man, and not God. But let not the rebound from that error make you forget that while Christ was very God, He was also very man.

Listen not for a moment to the wretched argument of the Roman Catholic, when he tells you that the Virgin Mary and the saints are more sympathizing than Christ. Answer him, that such an argument springs from ignorance of the Scriptures, and Christ's true nature. Answer him, that you have not so learned Christ, as to regard Him only as an austere Judge, and a being to be feared. Answer him, that the four Gos-

pels have taught you to regard Him as the most loving and sympathizing of Friends, as well as the mightiest and most powerful of Saviours. Answer him, that you want no comfort from saints and angels, from the Virgin Mary, or from Gabriel, so long as you can repose your weary soul on the man Christ Jesus.

III. Learn, in the 'third place, that *there may be much weakness and infirmity, even in a true Christian.*

You have a striking proof of this in the conduct of the disciples here recorded, when the waves broke over the ship. They awoke Jesus in haste. They said unto Him in fear and anxiety, "Master carest thou not that we perish?"

There was *impatience*. They might have waited till their Lord thought fit to arise from His sleep. "They awake Him."

There was *unbelief*. They forgot that they were in the keeping of One who had all power in His hand. "We perish."

There was *distrust*. They spoke as if they doubted their Lord's care and thoughtfulness for their safety and well-being. "Carest thou not that we perish?"

Poor faithless men! What business had they to be afraid? They had seen proof upon proof that all must be well so long as the Bridegroom was with them. They had witnessed repeated examples of His love and kindness towards them, sufficient to convince them that He would never let them come to real harm. But all was forgotten in the present danger. Sense of immediate peril often makes men have a bad memory. Fear is

often unable to reason from past experience. They heard the winds. They saw the waves. They felt the cold waters beating over them. They fancied death was close at hand. They could wait no longer in suspense. "Carest thou not," said they, "that we perish?"

But, after all, let us understand this is only a picture of what is constantly going on among believers in every age. There are too many disciples, I suspect, at this very day, like those who are here described.

Many of God's children get on very well so long as they have no trials. They follow Christ very tolerably in the time of fair weather. They fancy they are trusting Him entirely. They flatter themselves they have cast every care on Him. They obtain the reputation of being very good Christians.


But suddenly some unlooked for affliction assails them. Their property makes itself wings, and flies away. Their own health fails. Death comes up into their house. Tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word. And where now is their faith? Where is the strong confidence they thought they had? Where is their peace, their hope, their resignation? Alas! they are sought for and not found. They are weighed in the balance and found wanting. Fear, and doubt, and distress, and anxiety, break in upon them like a flood, and they seem at their wits' end. I know that this is a sad description. I only put it to the conscience of every real Christian, whether it is not correct and true.

Reader, the plain truth is that there is no literal and absolute perfection among true Christians so long as they are in the body. The best and brightest of God's

saints is but a poor mixed being. Converted, renewed, and sanctified though he be, he is still compassed with infirmity. There is not a just man upon earth that always doeth good, and sinneth not. In many things we offend all. A man may have true saving faith, and yet not have it always close at hand, and ready to be used.

Abraham was the father of the faithful. By faith he forsook his country and his kindred, and went out according to the command of God, to a land he had never seen. By faith he was content to dwell in the land as a stranger, believing that God would give it to him for an inheritance. And yet this very Abraham was so far overcome by unbelief, that he allowed Sarah to be called his sister, and not his wife, through the fear of man. Here was great infirmity. Yet there have been few greater saints than Abraham.

David was a man after God's own heart. He had faith to go out to battle with the giant Goliath, when he was but a youth. He declared his belief that the Lord, who delivered him from the paw of the lion and bear, would deliver him from this Philistine. He had faith to believe God's promise that he should one day be king of Israel, though he was owned by a few followers, —though Saul pursued him like a partridge on the mountains, and there often seemed but a step between him and death. And yet this very David at one time was so far overtaken by fear and unbelief, that he said, "I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul." He forgot the many wonderful deliverances he had experienced at God's hand. He only thought of his present



danger, and took refuge among the ungodly Philistines. Surely here was great infirmity. Yet there have been few stronger believers than David.


I know it is easy for a man to reply, "All this is very true, but it does not excuse the fears of the disciples. They had Jesus actually with them. They ought not to have been afraid. I should never have been so cowardly and faithless as they were!" I tell the man who argues in that way, that he knows little of his own heart. I tell him no one knows the length and breadth of his own infirmities, if he has not been tempted. No one can say how much weakness might appear in himself if he was placed in circumstances to call it forth.

Reader, have you faith in Christ? Do you feel such love and confidence in Him that you cannot understand being greatly moved by any event that could happen? It is all well. I am glad to hear it. But has this faith been tried? Has this confidence been put to the test? If not, take heed of condemning these disciples hastily. Be not high-minded, but fear. Think not because your heart is in a lively frame now, that such frame will always last. Say not, because your feelings are warm and fervent to-day, "To-morrow shall be as to-day, and much more abundant." Say not, because your heart is lifted up just now with a strong sense of Christ's mercy, "I shall never forget Him as long as I live." Oh! learn to abate something of this flattering estimate of yourself. You do not know yourself thoroughly. There are more things in your inward man than you are at present aware of. The Lord may leave you as He did Hezekiah, to show you "all that is in your heart."

(2 Chron. xxxii. 31.) Blessed is he that is clothed with humility. Happy is he that feareth always. Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.

Why do I dwell on this? Do I want to apologize for the corruptions of professing Christians, and excuse their sins? God forbid! Do I want to lower the standard of sanctification, and countenance any one in being a lazy, idle soldier of Christ? God forbid! Do I want to wipe out the broad line of distinction between the converted and the unconverted, and to wink at inconsistencies? Once more I say, God forbid! I hold strongly that there is a mighty difference between the true Christian and the false, between the believer and the unbeliever, between the children of God and the children of the world. I hold strongly that this difference is not merely one of faith, but of life,—not only one of profession, but of practice. I hold strongly that the ways of the believer should be as distinct from those of the unbeliever, as bitter from sweet, light from darkness, heat from cold.

But I do want young Christians to understand what they must expect to find *in themselves*. I want to prevent their being stumbled and puzzled by the discovery of their own weakness and infirmity. I want them to see that they may have true faith and grace, in spite of all the devil's whispers to the contrary, though they feel within many doubts and fears. I want them to observe that Peter, and James, and John, and their brethren, were true disciples, and yet not so spiritual but that they could be afraid. I do not tell them to make the unbelief of the disciples an excuse for



themselves. But I do tell them that it shows plainly that so long as they are in the body, they must not expect faith to be above the reach of fear.

Above all, I want all Christians to understand what they must expect *in other believers*. You must not hastily conclude that a man has no grace merely because you see in him some corruption. There are spots on the face of the sun, and yet the sun shines brightly, and enlightens the whole world. There is quartz and dross mixed up with many a lump of gold that comes from Australia, and yet who thinks the gold on that account worth nothing at all? There are flaws in some of the finest diamonds in the world; and yet they do not prevent their being rated at a priceless value. Away with this morbid squeamishness, which makes many ready to excommunicate a man if he only has a few faults! Let us be more quick to see grace, and more slow to see imperfections! Let us know if we cannot allow there is grace where there is corruption, we shall find no grace in the world. We are yet in the body. The devil is not dead. We are not yet like the angels. Heaven is not yet begun. The leprosy is not out of the walls of the house, however much we may scrape them, and never will be till the house is taken down. Our bodies are indeed the temple of the Holy Ghost, but not a perfect temple until they are raised or changed. Grace is indeed a treasure, but a treasure in earthen vessels. It is possible for a man to forsake all for Christ's sake, and yet to be overtaken occasionally with doubts and fears.

Reader, I beseech you to remember this. It is a lesson worth attention. The apostles believed in Christ,

loved Christ, and gave up all to follow Christ. And yet you see in this storm the apostles were afraid. Learn to be charitable in your judgment of them. Learn to be moderate in your expectations from your own heart. Contend to the death for the truth that no man is a true Christian who is not converted, and is not a holy man. But allow that a man may be converted, have a new heart, and be a holy man, and yet be liable to infirmity, doubts, and fears.

IV. Learn, in the fourth place, *the power of the Lord Jesus Christ.*

You have a striking example of His power in the history upon which I am now dwelling. The waves were breaking into the ship where Jesus was. The terrified disciples awoke him, and cried for help. "He arose and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm." This was a wonderful miracle. No one could do this but one who was almighty.

Make the winds cease with a word! Who does not know that it is a common saying, in order to describe an impossibility, "You might as well speak to the wind?" Yet Jesus rebukes the wind, and at once it ceases. This was power.

Calm the waves with a voice! What reader of history does not know that a mighty king of England tried in vain to stop the tide rising on the shore? Yet here is one who says to raging waves in a storm, "Peace, be still," and at once there was a calm. Here was power.

Reader, it is good for all men to have clear views of

the Lord Jesus Christ's power. Let the sinner know that the merciful Saviour, to whom he is urged to flee, and in whom he is invited to trust, is nothing less than the Almighty, and has power over all flesh to give eternal life. (Rev. i. 8. John xvii. 2.) Let the anxious inquirer understand that if he will only venture on Jesus, and take up the cross, he ventures on one who has all power in heaven and earth. (Matt. xxviii. 18.) Let the believer remember as he journeys through the wilderness, that his Mediator, and Advocate, and Physician, and Shepherd, and Redeemer, is Lord of lords, and King of kings, and that through Him all things may be done. (Rev. xvii. 14. Phil. iv. 13.) Let all study the subject, for it deserves to be studied.

Study it in His works of *creation*. "All things were made by Him, and without Him was not any thing made that was made." (John i. 3.) The heavens, and all their glorious hosts of inhabitants,—the earth, and all that it contains,—the sea, and all that is in it,—all creation, from the sun on high to the least worm below, was the work of Christ. He spake, and they came into being. He commanded, and they began to exist. That very Jesus, who was born of a poor woman at Bethlehem, and lived in a carpenter's house at Nazareth, had been the former of all things. Was not this power?

Study it in His works of *providence*, and the orderly continuance of all things in the world. "By Him all things consist." (Col. i. 17.) Sun, moon, and stars roll round in a perfect system. Spring, Summer, Autumn and Winter, follow one another in regular order. They continue to this day, and fail not, accord-

ing to the ordinance of Him who died on Calvary. (Psalm cxix. 91.) The kingdoms of this world rise and increase, and decline and pass away. The rulers of the earth plan and scheme, and make laws, and change laws, and war, and pull down one, and raise up another. But they little think that they rule only by the will of Jesus, and that nothing happens without the permission of the Lamb of God. They do not know that they and their subjects are all as a drop of water in the hand of the crucified One, and that He increaseth the nations, and diminisheth the nations, just according to His mind. Is not this power?

Study the subject not least in the miracles worked by our Lord Jesus Christ during the three years of His ministry upon earth. Learn from the mighty works which He did, that the things which are impossible with men, are possible with Christ. Regard every one of His miracles as an emblem and figure of spiritual things. See in it a lively picture of what He is able to do for your soul. He that could raise the dead with a word, can just as easily raise men from the death of sin. He that could give sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, and speech to the dumb, can also make sinners see the kingdom of God, hear the joyful sound of the Gospel, and speak forth the praise of redeeming love. He that could heal leprosy with a touch, can heal any disease of heart. He that could cast out devils, can bid every besetting sin yield to His grace. Oh! reader, begin to read Christ's miracles in this light. Wicked, and bad, and corrupt as you may feel, take comfort in the thought that you are not beyond Christ's power to

beal. Remember, that in Christ there is not only a fulness of mercy, but a fulness of power.

Study the subject in particular as placed before you this day. I dare be sure your heart has sometimes been tossed to and fro like the waves in a storm. You have found it agitated like the waters of the troubled sea when it cannot rest. Come and hear this day that there is one who can give you rest. Jesus can say to your heart, whatever may be its ailment, "Peace! be still."

What though your conscience within be lashed by the recollection of countless transgressions, and torn by every gust of temptation? What though the remembrance of past hideous profligacy be grievous unto you, and the burden intolerable? What though your heart seems full of evil, and sin appears to drag you whither it will like a slave? What though the devil ride to and fro over your soul like a conqueror, and tell you it is vain to struggle against him, there is no hope for you? I tell you there is one who can give even you pardon and peace. My Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, can rebuke the devil's raging, can calm even your soul's misery, and say even to you, "Peace! be still." He can scatter that cloud of guilt which now weighs you down. He can bid despair depart. He can drive fear away. He can remove the spirit of bondage, and fill you with the spirit of adoption. Satan may hold your soul like a strong man armed, but Jesus is stronger than he, and when He commands, the prisoners must go free. Oh! if any troubled reader wants a calm within, let him go this day to Jesus Christ, and all shall yet be well.

But what if your heart be right with God, and yet

you are pressed down with a load of earthly trouble? What if the fear of poverty is tossing you to and fro, and seems likely to overwhelm you? What if pain of body be racking you to distraction day after day? What if you are suddenly laid aside from active usefulness, and compelled by infirmity to sit still and do nothing? What if death has come into your home, and taken away your Rachel, or Joseph, or Benjamin, and left you alone crushed to the ground with sorrow? What if all this has happened? Still there is comfort in Christ. He can speak peace to wounded hearts as easily as calm troubled seas. He can rebuke rebellious wills as powerfully as raging winds. He can make storms of sorrow abate, and silence tumultuous passions as surely as He stopped the Galilean storm. He can say to the heaviest anxiety, "Peace! be still." The floods of care and tribulation may be mighty, but Jesus sits upon the waterfloods, and is mightier than the waves of the sea. (Psalm xciii. 4.) The winds of trouble may howl fiercely round you, but Jesus holds them in His hand, and can stay them when He lists. Oh! if any reader this day is broken-hearted, and care-worn, and sorrowful, let him go to Jesus Christ, and cry to Him, and he shall be refreshed. "Come unto me," He says, "all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matt. xi. 28.)

Reader, I invite you this day to take large views of Christ's power. Doubt anything else if you will, but never doubt Christ's power. Whether you do not secretly love sin, may be doubtful. Whether you are not privately clinging to the world, may be doubtful.

Whether the pride of your nature is not rising against the idea of being saved as a poor sinner by grace, may be doubtful. But one thing is not doubtful, and that is that Christ is able to save to the uttermost, and will save you if you will let Him.

V. Learn, in the last place, *how tenderly and patiently the Lord Jesus deals with weak believers.*

You see this truth brought out in His word to His disciples, when the wind ceased and there was a calm. He might well have rebuked them sharply. He might well have reminded them of all the great things He had done for them, and reproved them for their cowardice and mistrust. But there is nothing of anger in the Lord's words. He simply asks two questions: "Why are ye so fearful? How is it that ye have no faith?"

The whole of our Lord's conduct towards His disciples on earth, deserves close consideration. It throws a beautiful light on the compassion and long-suffering that there is in Him. No master surely ever had scholars so slow to learn their lessons, as Jesus had in the apostles. No scholars surely ever had so patient and forbearing a teacher, as the apostles had in Christ. Gather up all the evidence on this subject that lies scattered through the Gospels, and see the truth of what I say.

At no time of our Lord's ministry, did the disciples seem to comprehend fully the object of His coming into the world. The humiliation, the atonement, the crucifixion, were hidden things to them. The plainest words and clearest warnings from their Master of what was

going to befall Him, seemed to have no effect on their minds. They understood not. They perceived not. It was hid from their eyes. Once Peter even tried to dissuade our Lord from suffering: "Be it far from thee, Lord," he said, "this shall not be unto thee." (Matt. xvi. 22. Luke xviii. 34; ix. 45.)

Frequently you will see things in their spirit and demeanour, which are not at all to be commended. One day, we are told, they disputed among themselves who should be greatest. (Mark ix. 34.) Another day, they considered not His miracles, and their hearts were hardened. (Mark vi. 52.) Once, two of them wished to call down fire from heaven upon a village, because it did not receive them. (Luke ix. 54.) In the garden of Gethsemane, the three best of them slept, when they should have watched and prayed. In the hour of His betrayal, they all forsook Him and fled. And worst of all, Peter, the most forward of the twelve, denied his Master three times with an oath.

Even after the resurrection, you see the same unbelief and hardness of heart clinging to them. Though they saw their Lord with their eyes, and touched Him with their hands, even then some doubted. So weak were they in faith! So slow of heart were they to believe all that the prophets had written! So backward were they in understanding the meaning of our Lord's words, and actions, and life, and death!

But what do you see in our Lord's behaviour towards these disciples all through His ministry? You see nothing but unchanging pity, compassion, kindness, gentleness, patience, longsuffering, and love. He does

not cast them off for their stupidity. He does not reject them for their unbelief. He does not dismiss them for ever for cowardice. He teaches them as they are able to bear. He leads them on step by step, as a nurse does an infant when it first begins to walk. He sends them kind messages as soon as he is risen from the dead. "Go," He said to the women, "Go tell my *brethren* that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me." (Matt. xxviii. 10.) He gathers them around Him once more. He restores Peter to his place, and bids him feed His sheep. He condescends to sojourn with them forty days before He finally ascends. He commissions them to go forth as His messengers, and preach the Gospel to the Gentiles. He blesses them in parting, and encourages them with that gracious promise, "I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." (Matt. xxviii. 20.) Truly this was a love that passeth knowledge! This is not the manner of man!

Let all the world know that the Lord Christ is *very pitiful and of tender mercy*. He will not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax. As a father pitieth his own children, so He pitieth them that fear Him. As one whom his mother comforteth, so will He comfort His people. He cares for the lambs of His flock, as well as for the old sheep. He cares for the sick and feeble ones of the fold, as well as for the strong. It is written, that "He will carry them in his bosom," rather than let one of them be lost. (Isai. xl. 11.) He cares for the least member of His body, as well as for the greatest. He cares for the babes of His family, as well as for the grown up men. He cares for the ten-

derest little plant in His garden, as well as for the cedar of Lebanon. All are in His book of life, and all are under His charge. All are given to Him in an everlasting covenant, and He has undertaken, in spite of all weaknesses, to bring every one safe home. Only let a sinner lay hold on Christ by faith; and then, however feeble, Christ's word is pledged to him, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." He may correct him occasionally, in love. He may gently reprove him, at times. But He will never, never give him up. The devil shall never pluck him from Christ's hand.

Let all the world know that the Lord Jesus *will not cast away His believing people because of shortcomings and infirmities*. The husband does not put away his wife because he finds failings in her. The mother does not forsake her infant because it is weak, feeble, and ignorant. And the Lord Christ does not cast off poor sinners, who have committed their souls into His hands, because He sees in them blemishes and imperfections. Oh! no! it is His glory to pass over the faults of His people, and heal their backslidings,—to make much of their weak graces, and to pardon their many faults. Verily, the eleventh of Hebrews is a wonderful chapter. It is marvellous to observe how the Holy Ghost speaks of the worthies whose names are recorded in that chapter. The faith of the Lord's people is there brought forward and had in remembrance. But the faults of many an one, which might easily have been brought up also, are left alone and not mentioned at all.

Who is there now among the readers of these pages, that feels desires after salvation, but is afraid to become

decided, lest by and bye he should fall away? Consider, I beseech you the tenderness and patience of the Lord Jesus, and be afraid no more. Fear not to take up the cross and come out boldly from the world. That same Lord and Saviour who bore with the disciples, is ready and willing to bear with you. If you stumble, He will raise you. If you err, He will gently bring you back. If you faint, He will revive you. He will not lead you out of Egypt, and then suffer you to perish in the wilderness. He will conduct you safe into the promised land. Only commit yourself to His guidance, and, my soul for your's, He shall carry you safe home. Only hear Christ's voice, and follow Him, and you shall never perish.

Who is there among the readers of these pages, that has been converted, and desires to do his Lord's will? Take example, this day, by your Master's gentleness and longsuffering, and learn to be tender-hearted and kind to others. Deal gently with *young beginners*. Do not expect them to know everything and understand everything all at once. Take them by the hand. Lead them on and encourage them. Believe all things and hope all things, rather than make one heart sad which God would not have made sad. Deal gently with *backsliders*. Do not turn your back on them as if their case was hopeless. Use every lawful means to restore them to their former place. Consider yourself and your often infirmities, and do as you would be done by. Alas! there is a painful absence of the Master's mind among many of His disciples. There are few churches, I fear, in the present day, which would have received Peter

into communion again, for many a long year, after denying his Lord. There are few believers ready to do the work of Barnabas,—willing to take young converts by the hand, and encourage them at their first beginnings. Verily we want an outpouring of the Spirit upon believers, almost as much as upon the world !

And now, reader, I have only to ask you to make a practical use of the lessons I have brought before you. You have heard this day five things.

First. That Christ's service will not secure you against troubles.

Second. That Christ is very man as well as God.

Third. That believers may have much weakness and infirmity.

Fourth. That Christ has all power : and

Fifth. That Christ is full of patience and kindness towards His people. Remember these five lessons, and you will do well.

Bear with me a few moments, while I say a few words to impress the things you have been reading more deeply on your heart.

1. This book will very likely be read by some who know nothing of Christ's service by experience, or of Christ Himself.

There are only too many who take no interest whatever in the things about which I have been writing. Their treasure is all below. They are wholly taken up with the things of the world. They care nothing about the believer's conflicts, and struggles, and infirmities, and doubts, and fears.

They care little whether Christ is man or God. They care little whether He did miracles or not. It is all a matter of words, and names, and forms, about which they do not trouble themselves. They are without God in the world.

Reader, if perchance you are such a man as this, I can only warn you solemnly, that your present course cannot last. You will not live for ever. There must be an end. Grey hairs, age, sickness, infirmities, death,—all, all are before you, and must be met one day. What will you do when that day comes?

Remember my words this day. You will find no comfort when sick and dying, unless Jesus Christ is your friend. You will discover, to your sorrow and confusion, that however much men may talk and boast, they cannot do without Christ when they come to their death-bed. You may send for ministers, and get them to read prayers and give you the sacrament. You may go through every form and ceremony of Christianity. But if you persist in living a careless and worldly life, and despising Christ in the morning of your days, you must not be surprised if Christ leave you to yourself in your latter end. Alas! these are solemn words, and are often sadly fulfilled: "I will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh." (Prov. i. 26.)

Come then, this day, and be advised by one who loves your soul. Cease to do evil. Learn to do well. Forsake the foolish, and go in the path of understanding. Cast away that pride which hangs about your heart, and seek the Lord Jesus while He may be found. Cast away that spiritual sloth which is palsying

your soul, and resolve to take trouble about your Bible, your prayers, and your Sundays. Break off from a world which can never really satisfy you, and seek that treasure which alone is truly incorruptible. 'Oh! that the Lord's own words might find a place in your conscience; "How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity, and the scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you." (Prov. i. 22, 23.) Reader, I believe the crowning sin of Judas Iscariot was, that he would not seek pardon and turn again to his Lord. Beware, lest that be your sin also.

2. This book will probably fall into the hands of some who love the Lord Jesus and believe in Him, and yet desire to love Him better.

Reader, if you are such a man, suffer the word of exhortation, and apply it to your heart.

For one thing, keep before your mind, as an ever present truth, that *the Lord Jesus is an actual living person*, and deal with Him as such.

I fear the personality of our Lord is sadly lost sight of by many professors in the present day. Their talk is more about salvation, than about the Saviour;—more about redemption, than about the Redeemer;—more about justification, than about Jesus;—more about Christ's work, than about Christ's person. This is a great fault, and one that fully accounts for the dry and sapless character of the religion of many professors.

Reader, as ever you would grow in grace, and have joy and peace in believing, beware of falling into this error. Cease to regard the Gospel as a mere collection of dry doctrines. Look at it rather as the revelation of a mighty living *Being* in whose sight you are daily to live. Cease to regard it as a mere set of abstract propositions and abstruse principles and rules. Look at it as the introduction to a glorious personal *Friend*. This is the kind of Gospel that the apostles preached. They did not go about the world telling men of love and mercy and pardon in the abstract. The leading subject of all their sermons, was the loving heart of *an actual living Christ*. This is the kind of Gospel which is most calculated to promote sanctification and meekness for glory. Nothing surely is so likely to prepare us for that heaven where Christ's personal presence will be all, and that glory where we shall meet Christ face to face, as to realize communion with Christ, as an actual living Person, here on earth. Oh! reader, there is all the difference in the world, between an *idea* and a *person*.

For another thing, try to keep before your mind, as an ever present truth, that *the Lord Jesus is utterly unchanged*.

That Saviour in whom you trust, is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. He knows no variableness nor shadow of turning. Though high in heaven at God's right hand, He is just the same in heart that He was 1800 years ago on earth. Remember this and you will do well.

Follow Him all through His journeys to and fro in

Palestine. Mark how He received all that came to Him, and cast out none. Mark how He had an ear to listen to every tale of sorrow, a hand to help every case of distress, a heart to feel for all who needed sympathy. And then say to yourself, "This same Jesus is He who is my Lord and Saviour. Place and time have made no difference in Him. What He was, He is, and will be for evermore."

Surely this thought will give life and reality to daily communion. Surely this thought will give substance and shape to your expectation of good things to come. Surely it is matter for joyful reflection, that He who was thirty-three years upon earth, and whose life we read in the Gospels, is the very Saviour in whose presence we shall spend eternity.

Reader, the last word of this subject shall be the same as the first. I want men to read the four Gospels more than they do. I want men to become better acquainted with Christ. I want unconverted men to know Jesus, that they may have eternal life through Him. I want believers to know Jesus better, that they may become more happy, more holy, and more meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.

I remain,

Your affectionate Friend,

J. C. RYLE.

“All in All.”

COLOSS. III. 11.

“*Christ is all.*”

READER,

What do you think of these words? They are short words and soon spoken; but they contain great things.

These three words are the essence and substance of Christianity. If your heart can really go along with them, it is well with your soul: if not, you may be sure you have yet much to learn.

Let me try to set before you in what sense “Christ is all;” and let me ask you, as you read, to judge yourself honestly, that you may not make shipwreck in the judgment of the last day.

I. First then, I would have you know, Christ is *all in all the counsels of God concerning man.*

There was a time when this earth had no being. Solid as the mountains look,—boundless as the sea

appears,—they once did not exist. And man, with all the high thoughts he now has of himself, was a creature unknown.

And where was Christ then ?

Even then Christ was “with God, was God, and was equal with God.” (John i. 1 ; Phil. ii. 6.) Even then He was the beloved Son of the Father : “Thou lovedst me,” He says, before the foundation of the world ;” “I had glory with thee before the world began.” (John xvii. 5, 24.) Even then He was the Saviour “fore-ordained before the foundation of the world,” (1 Peter i. 20.) and believers were “chosen in him.” (Ephes. i. 4.)

There came a time when this earth was created. Sun, moon, and stars,—sea, land, and all their inhabitants, were called into being, and made out of nothing. And, last of all, man was formed out of the dust of the ground.

And where was Christ then ?

Hear what the Scripture says : “All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.” (John i. 3.) “By him were all things created, that are in heaven and that are in earth.” (Colos. i. 16.) “And thou Lord in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of thine hands.” (Heb. i. 10.) Can you wonder that the Lord Jesus in His preaching should continually draw lessons from the book of nature ? When He spoke of the sheep, the ravens, the lilies, the fig-tree, the vine,—He spoke of things which He Himself had made.

There came a day when sin entered the world. Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, and fell. They lost that holy nature in which they were first formed. They forfeited the friendship and favour of God. They became guilty, corrupt, helpless, hopeless sinners. Sin came as a barrier between themselves and their holy Father in heaven. And had He dealt with them according to their deserts, there had been nothing before them but death, hell, and everlasting ruin.

And where was Christ then?

That very day He was revealed to our trembling parents, as the only hope of salvation. The very day they fell they were told that the seed of the woman should yet bruise the serpent's head,—that a Saviour born of a woman should overcome the devil, and win for sinful man an entrance to eternal life. Christ was held up as the true light of the world, in the very day of the fall, and never has any name been made known from that day by which souls could be saved, excepting His. By Him all saved souls have entered heaven, from Adam downwards, and without Him none have ever escaped hell.

There came a time when the world seemed sunk and buried in ignorance of God. After 4000 years the nations of the earth appeared to have clean forgotten the God that made them. Assyrian, Persian, Grecian, and Roman empires, had done nothing but spread superstition and idolatry. Poets, historians, philosophers, had proved that with all their intellectual powers they had no right knowledge of God, and that man, left to himself, was utterly corrupt. "The world by

wisdom knew not God." (1 Cor. i. 21.) Excepting a few despised Jews in a corner of the earth, the whole world was dead in ignorance and sin.

And what did Christ do then?

He left the glory He had had from all eternity with the Father, and came down into the world to provide a salvation. He took our nature upon Him, and was born as a man. As a man He did the will of God perfectly, which we all had left undone. As a man He suffered on the cross the wrath of God which we ought to have suffered. He brought in everlasting righteousness for us. He redeemed us from the curse of a broken law. He opened a fountain for all sin and uncleanness. He died for our sins. He rose again for our justification. He ascended to God's right hand, and there sat down, waiting till His enemies should be made His footstool. And there He sits now, offering salvation to all who will come to Him,—interceding for all who believe in Him,—and managing by God's appointment all that concerns the salvation of souls.

There is a time coming when sin shall be cast out from this world. Wickedness shall not always flourish unpunished. Satan shall not always reign. Creation shall not always groan being burdened. There shall be a day of restitution of all things. There shall be a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, and the knowledge of God shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea.

And where shall Christ be then? And what shall He do?

Christ Himself shall be King. He shall return to

this earth, and make all things new. He shall come in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory, and the kingdoms of the world shall become His. The heathen shall be given to Him for His inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession. To Him every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall confess that He is Lord. His dominion shall be an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.

There is a day coming when all men shall be judged. The sea shall give up the dead which are in it, and death and hell shall deliver up the dead which are in them. All that sleep in the grave shall come forth, and all shall be judged according to their works.

And where will Christ be then?

Christ Himself will be the Judge. "The Father hath committed all judgment unto the Son." "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory:—and before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats." "We must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ: that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." (John v. 22. Matt. xxv. 22. 2 Cor. v. 10.)

Oh! reader, if you are one that thinks little of Christ, you are very unlike God. You are of one mind, and God is of another. You are of one judgment, and God is of another. You think it enough to give Christ a *little* honour,—a *little* reverence,—a *little* respect. But

in all God the Father's eternal counsels, in creation, redemption, restitution, and judgment,—in all these, Christ is "all."

Surely you would do well to consider these things. I warn you, it is not written in vain, "He that honour-eth not the Son, honoureth not the Father which hath sent him." (John v. 23.)

II. I would have you know, in the second place, that "*Christ is all*" in the *Bible*.

In every part of both Testaments Christ is to be found,—dimly and indistinctly at the beginning,—more clearly and plainly in the middle,—fully and completely at the end,—but really and substantially everywhere.

Christ's sacrifice and death for sinners, and Christ's kingdom and future glory, are the light you must bring to bear on any book of Scripture you read. Christ's cross and Christ's crown are the clue you must hold fast, if you would find your way through Scripture difficulties. Christ is the only key that will unlock many of the dark places of the word. Some people complain that they do not understand the Bible. And the reason is very simple. They do not use the key. To them the Bible is like the hieroglyphics in Egypt. It is a mystery, just because they do not use the key.

It was Christ crucified who was set forth in every Old Testament sacrifice. Every animal slain and offered on an altar, was a confession that a Saviour was looked for who should die for sinners,—a Saviour who should take away man's sin, by suffering in his stead.

It was Christ to whom Abel looked when he offered

a better sacrifice than Cain. He offered the firstlings of his flock, with the blood thereof, and in so doing showed his belief that without shedding of blood there is no remission. (Heb. xi. 4.)

It was Christ of whom Enoch prophecied in the days of abounding wickedness before the flood. "Behold," he said, "the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints to execute judgment upon all." (Jude 15.)

It was Christ to whom Abraham looked when he dwelt in tents in the land of promise. He believed that in his seed,—in one born of his family,—all the nations of the earth should be blessed. By faith he saw Christ's day, and was glad.

It was Christ of whom Jacob spoke to his sons, as he lay dying. He marked out the tribe out of which He would be born, and foretold that gathering together unto Him which is yet to be accomplished. "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor the lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come, and unto him shall the gathering of the people be." (Gen. xlix. 10.)

It was Christ who was the substance of the ceremonial law, which God gave to Israel by the hand of Moses. The morning and evening sacrifice,—the continual shedding of blood,—the altar,—the mercy-seat,—the high priest,—the passover,—the day of atonement,—the scape-goat:—all these were so many pictures, types, and emblems of Christ and His work. God had compassion upon the weakness of His people. He taught them Christ line upon line, and as we teach little children by similitudes. It was in this sense especially that "the law was a schoolmaster to lead" the Jews "unto Christ."

It was Christ to whom God directed the attention of Israel by all the daily miracles which were done before their eyes in the wilderness. The pillar of cloud and fire which guided them,—the manna from heaven which every morning fed them,—the water from the smitten rock which followed them,—all and each were figures of Christ.

It was Christ of whom all the judges were types. Joshua, and David, and Gideon, and Jephthah, and Samson, and all the rest whom God raised up to deliver Israel from captivity,—all were emblems of Christ. All were meant to remind the tribes of that far higher Deliverer who was yet to come.

It was Christ of whom David the king was a type. Anointed and chosen when few gave him honour,—despised and rejected by Saul and all the tribes,—persecuted and obliged to flee for his life, a man of sorrow all his life, and yet at length a conqueror;—in all these things David represented Christ.

It was Christ of whom all the prophets from Isaiah to Malachi spoke. They saw through a glass darkly. They sometimes dwelt on His sufferings, and sometimes on His glory that should follow. They did not always mark out for us the distinction between Christ's first coming and Christ's second coming. They were sometimes moved by the Holy Ghost to write of the times of Christ crucified, and sometimes of Christ's kingdom in the latter days. But Jesus dying, or Jesus reigning, was the thought you will ever find uppermost in their minds.

It is Christ, I need hardly tell you, of whom the

whole New Testament is full. The Gospels are Christ living, speaking, and moving among us. The Acts are Christ preached, published, and proclaimed. The Epistles are Christ written of, explained, and exalted. But all through, from first to last, there is but one Name above every other, and that is Christ.

Oh! reader, you should ask yourself what your Bible is to you. Is it a Bible in which you have found Christ? Is it a Bible in which "Christ is all?" If not, my dear brother or sister, I tell you plainly, you have used your Bible to very little purpose. You are like the man who studied the solar system, and left out in his studies the sun, which is the centre of all. It is no wonder if you find your Bible a dull book.

III. I would have you know in the third place, that "*Christ is all*" in the religion of all true Christians on earth.

In saying this, I wish to guard myself against being misunderstood. I hold the absolute necessity of the election of God the Father, and the sanctification of God the Spirit, in order to effect the salvation of every one that is saved. I hold that there is a perfect harmony and unison in the action of the three Persons of the Trinity, in bringing any man to glory, and that all three co-operate and work a joint work in his deliverance from sin and hell. I hold that every one who reaches heaven, will ascribe all the glory of his salvation to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, three Persons in one God.

But at the same time I see clear proof in Scripture, that it is the mind of the blessed Trinity that Christ

should be prominently and distinctly exalted, in the matter of saving souls. Christ is set forth as the "Word," through whom God's love to sinners is made known. Christ's incarnation and atoning death on the cross, are the great corner-stone on which the whole plan of salvation rests. Christ is the way and door, by which alone approaches to God are to be made. Christ is the root into which all elect sinners must be grafted. Christ is the only meeting-place between heaven and earth, between the Holy Trinity and the poor sinful child of Adam. It is Christ whom God the Father has sealed and appointed to convey life to a dead world. It is Christ to whom the Father has given a people to be brought to glory. It is Christ of whom the Spirit testifies, and to whom he always leads a soul for pardon and peace. In short, it has pleased the Father that in Christ all fulness should dwell. What the sun is in the firmament of heaven, that Christ is in true Christianity.

Reader, I say these things by way of explanation. I want you clearly to understand, that in saying "Christ is all," I do *not* mean to shut out the work of the Father and of the Spirit. Now let me show what I *do* mean.

Christ is *all in a sinner's justification before God*.

Through Him alone we can have peace with a Holy God. By Him alone we can have admission into the presence of the Most High, and stand there without dismay. In Him alone can God be just, and justify the ungodly.

Reader, wherewith can any mortal man come before God? What can we bring as a plea for acquittal before that Glorious Being, in whose eyes the very heavens are not clean?

Shall we say that we have done our duty to God? Shall we say that we have done our duty to our neighbour? Shall we bring forward our prayers?—our regularity?—our morality?—our amendments?—our church-going? Shall we ask to be accepted because of any of these?

Which of these things will stand God's eye? Which of them will actually justify you and me? Which of them will carry us clear through judgment, and land us safe in glory?

None, none, none! Take any commandment of the ten, and let us examine ourselves by it. We have broken it repeatedly.—We cannot answer God one of a thousand. Take any of us, and look narrowly into our ways,—and we are nothing but sinners. There is but one verdict,—We are all guilty,—all deserve hell,—all ought to die. Wherewith can we come before God?

We must come in the name of Jesus,—standing on no other ground,—pleading no other plea than this, “Christ died on the cross for the ungodly, and I trust in Him.”

The garment of our Elder Brother,—the righteousness of Christ,—this is the only robe which can cover you and me, and enable us to stand in the light of heaven without shame.

The name of Jesus is the only name by which you and I will be let through the gate of eternal glory. If we come to that gate in our own names, we are lost. If we come in the name of Jesus, it is a passport and Shibboleth, and we shall live.

The mark of the blood of Christ is the only mark that can save us from destruction. When the angels are

separating the children of Adam in the last day, if we are not found marked with that atoning blood, we had better never have been born.

Oh ! believe me, Christ must be "all" to that soul who would be justified.—You must be content to go to heaven as a beggar,—saved by free grace, simply as a believer in Jesus,—or you will never be saved at all.

Is there a thoughtless, worldly soul among the readers of this book ? Is there one who thinks to reach heaven by saying, "Lord have mercy on me," without Christ ?—My dear friend, you are sowing misery for yourself and unless you alter, you will awake to endless woe.

Is there a proud, formal soul among the readers of this book ? Is there any one thinking to make himself fit for heaven, and good enough by his own doings ?—My dear brother, you are building a Babel, and you will never reach heaven in your present state.

But is there a labouring, heavy-laden one among the readers of this book ? Is there one who wants to be saved, and feels a vile sinner ? I say to such an one, "Come to Christ and He shall save you. Come to Christ and cast the burden of your soul on Him. Fear not : only believe."

Do you fear wrath ?—Christ can deliver you from the wrath to come. Do you fear the curse of a broken law ?—Christ can redeem you from the curse of the law. Do you feel far away ?—Christ has suffered to bring you nigh to God. Do you feel unclean ?—Christ's blood can cleanse all sin away. Do you feel imperfect ?—You shall be complete in Christ. Do you feel as if you were nothing ?—Christ shall be "all in all" to your

soul. Never did saint reach heaven with any tale but this, "I was washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb."

But again, Christ is not only all in the justification of a true Christian, but He is also *all in his sanctification*.

I would not have you misunderstand me. I do not mean for a moment to undervalue the work of the Spirit. But this I say, that no man is ever holy till he comes to Christ and is united to Him. Till then his works are dead works, and he has no holiness at all.—First you must be joined to Christ, and then you shall be holy. "Without Him, separate from Him, you can do nothing." (John xv. 5.)

And no man can grow in holiness except he abides in Christ. Christ is the great root from which every believer must draw his strength to go forward. The Spirit is His special gift, His purchased gift for His people. A believer must not only "receive Christ Jesus the Lord," but "walk in him, and be rooted and built up in him." (Col. ii. 6, 7.)

Would you be holy? Then Christ is the manna you must daily eat, like Israel in the wilderness of old.

Would you be holy? Then Christ must be the rock from which you must daily drink the living water.

Would you be holy? Then you must be ever looking unto Jesus,—looking at His cross, and learning fresh motives for a closer walk with God,—looking at His example, and taking Him for your pattern. Looking at Him, you would become like Him. Looking at Him, your face would shine without your knowing it. Look less at yourself and more at Christ, and you will find besetting sins dropping off and leaving you, and your eyes enlightened more and more every day.

Ah! reader, the true secret of coming up out of the wilderness, is to come up "leaning on the Beloved." (Cant. viii. 5.) The true way to be strong, is to realize our weakness, and to feel that Christ must be all. The true way to grow in grace, is to make use of Christ as a fountain for every minute's necessities. We ought to employ Him as the Prophet's wife employed the oil,—not only to pay our debts, but to live on also. (2 Kings iv. 7.) I do pity those who try to be holy without Christ. Your labour is all in vain. You are building up a wall with untempered mortar. Believe me, believe me, you are beginning at the wrong end. You must come to Christ first, and He shall give you His sanctifying Spirit. You must learn to say with Paul, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." (Phil. iv. 13.)

But again, Christ is not only all in the sanctification of a true Christian, but *all in his comfort in time present.*

A saved soul has many sorrows. He has a body like other men,—weak and frail. He has a heart like other men,—and often a more sensitive one too. He has trials and losses to bear like others,—and often more. He has his share of bereavements, deaths, disappointments, crosses. He has the world to oppose,—relations to bear with,—persecutions to endure,—and a death to die.

And what shall enable him to bear all this? Nothing but "the consolation there is in Christ." (Phil. ii. 1.)

Jesus is indeed the brother born for adversity. He is the friend that sticketh closer than a brother, and He alone can comfort His people. He can be touched with the feeling of their infirmities, for He suffered Himself. He knows what sorrow is, for He was a man of sorrows.

He knows what an aching body is, for His body was racked with pain. He cried, "All my bones are out of joint." (Psalm xxii. 14.) He knows what poverty and weariness are, for He was often wearied and had not where to lay His head. He knows what family unkindness is, for even His brethren did not believe Him. He had no honour in His own house.

And Jesus knows exactly how to comfort His afflicted people. He knows how to pour in oil and wine into the wounds of the Spirit,—how to fill up gaps in empty hearts,—how to speak a word in season to the weary,—how to heal the broken heart,—how to make all our bed in sickness,—how to draw nigh when we are faint, and say, "Fear not, I am thy salvation."

Ah! reader, we talk of sympathy being pleasant. There is no sympathy like that of Christ. In all your afflictions, believing reader, He is afflicted. He knows your sorrows. In all your pain He is pained, and like the good Physician, He will not measure out to you one drop of sorrow too much. "In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts refreshed my soul," said David. Many a believer, I am sure, could say as much. "If the Lord Himself had not stood by me, the deep waters would have gone over my soul."

How a believer gets through all his troubles appears wonderful. How he is carried through the fire and water he passes through seems past comprehension. But the true account of it is just this,—that Christ is not only justification and sanctification, but consolation also.

Oh! you who want unfailing comfort, I commend you to Christ. In Him alone there is no failure. Rich

men are disappointed in their treasures. Learned men are disappointed in their books. Husbands are disappointed in their wives. Wives are disappointed in their husbands. Parents are disappointed in their children. Statesmen are disappointed when they have place and power. But no man was ever disappointed in Christ.

But as Christ is all in the comforts of a true Christian in time present, so Christ is *all in his hopes for time to come*.

Few men and women, I suppose, are to be found who do not indulge in hopes of some kind about their souls. But the hopes of the vast majority are nothing but vain fancies. They are built on no solid foundation. No living man but the real child of God,—the sincere, thorough-going Christian,—can give a reasonable account of the hope that is in him. No hope is reasonable which is not scriptural.

A true Christian has a good hope when he looks forward.—The worldly man has none. A true Christian sees light in the distance.—The worldly man sees nothing but darkness. And what is the hope of a true Christian? It is just this, that Jesus Christ is coming again,—coming without sin,—coming with all His people,—coming to wipe away every tear,—coming to raise His sleeping saints from the grave,—coming to gather together all His family, that they may be for ever with Him.

Why is a believer patient? Because he looks for the coming of the Lord. He can bear hard things without murmuring. He knows the time is short. He waits quietly for the King.

Why is he moderate in all things? Because he expects his Lord soon to return. His treasure is in heaven. His good things are yet to come. The world is not his rest, but an inn. And an inn is not home. He knows that He that shall come will soon come, and not tarry. Christ is coming, and that is enough.

Ah! Reader, this is indeed a "blessed hope." Now is the school-time,—then the eternal holiday. Now is the scattering,—then the gathering. Now is the time of sowing,—then the harvest. Now is the working season,—then the wages. Now is the cross,—then the crown.

People talk of their "expectations" and hopes from this world. None have such solid expectations as a saved soul. He can say, "My soul, wait thou only upon God; my expectation is from him."

Reader, in all true saving religion Christ is all,—all in justification,—all in sanctification,—all in comfort,—all in hope. Blessed is that mother's child that *knows* it, and far more blessed is he that *feels* it too. Oh! that you would prove your own self, and see what you know of it for your own soul!

IV. One thing more I will add, and then I have done. I would have you know that *Christ will be all in heaven.*

I cannot dwell long on this point. I have not power, if I had time. I can ill describe things unseen and a world unknown.

But this I know, that all men and women who reach heaven, will find that even there also "Christ is all."

Like the altar in Solomon's temple, Christ crucified will be the grand object in heaven. That altar struck the eye of every one who entered the temple gates. It was a great brazen altar, twenty cubits broad,—as broad as the front of the temple itself. (2 Chron. iii. 4. iv. 1.) So in like manner will Jesus fill the eye of all who enter glory. In the midst of the throne, and surrounded by adoring angels and saints, there will be "the Lamb that was slain." And the Lamb shall be the light of the place.

The *praise* of the Lord Jesus will be the eternal song of all the inhabitants of heaven. They will say with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain. Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be to him that sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever." (Rev. v. 12, 13.)

The *service* of the Lord Jesus will be one eternal occupation of all the inhabitants of heaven. We shall serve Him day and night in His temple. Blessed is the thought that we shall at length attend on Him without distraction, and work for Him without weariness.

The *presence* of Christ Himself shall be one everlasting enjoyment of the inhabitants of heaven. We shall see His face, and hear His voice, and speak with Him as friend with friend. Sweet is the thought that whosoever may be wanting at the marriage supper, the Master Himself will be there. His presence will satisfy all our wants.

Oh! reader, what a home heaven will be to those who have loved the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Here you live by faith in Him, and find peace, though

you see Him not. There you will see Him face to face, and find He is altogether lovely. Better indeed will be the sight of the eyes than the wandering of the desire!

But oh! how little fit for heaven are many who talk of "going to heaven" when they die, while they manifestly have no saving faith, and no real acquaintance with Christ. You give Christ no honour here. You have no communion with Him. You do not love Him. Alas! what could you do in heaven? It would be no place for you. Its joys would be no joys for you. Its happiness would be a happiness into which you could not enter. Its employments would be a weariness and a burden to your heart. Oh! repent and change before it be too late.

And now, reader, I trust I have shown you how deep are the foundations of that little expression, "Christ is all."

I might easily add to the things I have told you, if space permitted. The subject is not exhausted. I have barely walked over the surface of it. There are mines of precious truth connected with it, which I have left unopened.

I might tell you how *Christ ought to be all in a visible church*. Splendid religious buildings, numerous religious services, gorgeous ceremonies, troops of ordained men, all, all are nothing in the sight of God, if the Lord Jesus himself in all his offices is not honoured, magnified, and exalted. That church is but a dead carcase, in which Christ is not "all."

I might tell you how *Christ ought to be all in a ministry*. The great work which ordained men are in-

tended to do, is to lift up Christ. We are to be like the pole on which the brazen serpent was hung. We are useful so long as we exalt the great object of faith, but useful no further. We are to be ambassadors to carry tidings to a rebellious world, about the King's Son, and if we teach men to think more about us and our office than about Him, we are not fit for our place. The Spirit will never honour that minister who does not testify of Christ,—who does not make Christ “all.”

I might tell you how language seems exhausted in the Bible, in describing Christ's various offices. I might tell you how figures seem endless, which are employed in unfolding Christ's fulness. The High Priest, the Mediator, the Redeemer, the Saviour, the Advocate, the Shepherd, the Physician, the Bridegroom, the Head, the Bread of Life, the Light of the World, the Way, the Door, the Vine, the Rock, the Fountain, the Sun of Righteousness, the Forerunner, the Surety, the Captain, the Prince of Life, the Amen, the Almighty, the Author and Finisher of Faith, the Lamb of God, the King of Saints, the Wonderful, the Mighty God, the Counsellor, the Bishop of Souls,—all these, and many more, are names given to Christ in Scripture. Each is a fountain of instruction and comfort for every one who is willing to drink of it. Each supplies matter for useful meditation.

But I trust I have said enough to throw light on the subject I want to impress on your mind. I trust I have said enough to show the immense importance of the practical conclusions with which I now desire to finish this subject.

1. Is Christ all? Then LEARN THE UTTER USELESSNESS OF A CHRISTLESS RELIGION.

There are only too many baptized men and women who practically know nothing at all about Christ. Their religion consists in a few vague notions, and empty expressions. "They trust they are no worse than others. They keep to their church. They try to do their duty. They do nobody any harm. They hope God will be merciful to them. They trust the Almighty will pardon their sins, and take them to heaven when they die." This is about the whole of their religion!

But what do these people know practically about Christ? Nothing, nothing at all! What experimental acquaintance have they with His offices and work, His blood, His righteousness, His mediation, His priesthood, His intercession? None, none at all! Ask them about a saving faith,—ask them about being born again of the Spirit,—ask them about being sanctified in Christ Jesus. What answer will you get? You are a barbarian to them. You have asked them simple Bible questions. But they know no more about them experimentally, than a Buddhist or a Turk.

And yet this is the religion of hundreds and thousands of people who are called Christians, all over the world!

Reader, if you are a man of this kind, I warn you plainly that such Christianity will never take you to heaven. It may do very well in the eye of man. It may pass muster very decently at the vestry-meeting, in the place of business, in the House of Commons, or in the streets. But it will never comfort you. It will

never satisfy your conscience. It will never save your soul.

I warn you plainly, that all notions and theories about God being merciful without Christ, and excepting through Christ, are baseless delusions and empty fancies. Such theories are as purely an idol of man's invention, as the idol of Juggernaut. They are all of the earth, earthy. They never came down from heaven. The God of heaven has sealed and appointed Christ as the one only Saviour and way of life, and all who would be saved, must be content to be saved by Him, or they will never be saved at all.

Reader, take notice. I give you fair warning this day. A religion without Christ will never save your soul.

2. Let me say another thing. Is Christ all? Then LEARN THE ENORMOUS FOLLY OF JOINING ANYTHING WITH CHRIST IN THE MATTER OF SALVATION.

There are multitudes of baptized men and women who profess to honour Christ, but in reality do Him great dishonour. They give Christ a certain place in their system of religion, but not in the place which God intended Him to fill. Christ alone is not "all in all" to their souls.—No! It is either Christ and the church, —or Christ and the sacraments, —or Christ and His ordained ministers, —or Christ and their own repentance, —or Christ and their own goodness, —or Christ and their own prayers, —or Christ and their own sincerity and charity, on which they practically rest their souls.

Reader, if you are a Christian of this kind, I warn you also plainly, that your religion is an offence to God.

You are changing God's plan of salvation into a plan of your own devising, You are in effect deposing Christ from His throne, by giving the glory due to Him to another.

I care not who it is that teaches you your religion, and on whose word you build. Whether he be Pope or Cardinal, Archbishop or Bishop, Dean or Archdeacon, Presbyter or Deacon, Episcopalian or Presbyterian, Baptist or Independent, Wesleyan or Plymouth Brother, whosoever adds anything to Christ, teaches you wrong.

I care not what it is that you add to Christ. Whether it be the necessity of joining the Church of Rome, or of being an Episcopalian, or of becoming a Free Churchman, or of giving up the liturgy, or of being dipped, —whatever you may practically add to Christ in the matter of salvation, you do Christ an injury.

Reader, take heed what you are doing. Beware of giving to Christ's servants the honour due to none but Christ. Beware of giving the Lord's ordinances the honour due unto the Lord. Beware of resting the burden of your soul on anything but Christ, and Christ alone.

3. Let me say another thing. Is Christ all? Then
LET ALL WHO WANT TO BE SAVED, APPLY DIRECT TO
CHRIST.

There are many who hear of Christ with the ear, and believe all they are told about Him. They allow that there is no salvation excepting in Christ. They acknowledge that Jesus alone can deliver them from hell, and present them faultless before God.

But they seem never to get beyond this general acknowledgment. They never fairly lay hold on Christ for their own souls. They stick fast in a state of wishing, and wanting, and feeling, and intending, and never get any further. They see what we mean. They know it is all true. They hope one day to get the full benefit of it. But at present they get no benefit. The world is their "all." Politics are their "all." Pleasure is their "all." Business is their "all." But Christ is not their all.

Reader, if you are a man of this kind, I warn you also plainly, you are in a bad state of soul. You are as truly in the way to hell in your present condition, as Judas Iscariot, or Ahab, or Cain. Believe me, there must be actual faith in Christ, or else Christ died in vain, so far as you are concerned. It is not looking at the bread that feeds the hungry man, but the actual eating of it. It is not gazing on the life-boat that saves the shipwrecked sailor, but actual getting into it. It is not knowing and believing that Christ is a Saviour, that will save your soul, unless there are actual transactions between you and Christ.

Take the advice I give you this day, and act upon it at once. Stand still no longer, waiting for some imaginary frames and feelings which will never come. Hesitate no longer, under the idea that you must first of all obtain the Spirit, and then come to Christ. Arise and come to Christ just as you are. He waits for you, and is as willing to save as He is mighty. He is the appointed Physician for sin-sick souls. Deal with Him

as you would with your doctor about the cure of a disease of your body. Make a direct application to Him, and tell Him all your wants. Take with you words this day and cry mightily to the Lord Jesus for pardon and peace. Tell Him that you have heard that He receives sinners, and that you are such. Tell Him you want to be saved, and ask Him to save you. Rest not till you have actually tasted for yourself that the Lord is gracious. Do this, and you shall find, sooner or later, if you are really in earnest, that "Christ is all."

4. One more thing let me add. Is Christ all? Then LET ALL HIS CONVERTED PEOPLE DEAL WITH HIM AS IF THEY REALLY BELIEVED IT. LET THEM LEAN ON HIM AND TRUST HIM FAR MORE THAN THEY HAVE EVER DONE YET.

Alas! there are many of the Lord's people who live far below their privileges. There are many truly Christian souls who rob themselves of their own peace and forsake their own mercies. There are many who insensibly join their own faith, or the work of the Spirit in their own hearts, to Christ, and so miss the fulness of Gospel peace.

Reader, if you are a believer, I beseech you for your own sake, to make sure that Christ is really and thoroughly your all in all. Beware of allowing yourself to mingle anything of your own with Christ.

Have you faith? It is a priceless blessing. Happy indeed are they who are willing and ready to trust Jesus. But take heed you do not make a Christ of your faith. Rest not on your own faith, but on Christ.

Is the work of the Spirit in your soul? Thank God for it. It is a work that shall never be overthrown. But oh! beware, lest unawares to yourself, you make a Christ of the work of the Spirit. Rest not on the work of the Spirit, but on Christ.

Learn, I entreat you, to look more and more at the great *object of faith*, Jesus Christ, and to keep your mind dwelling on Him. So doing you would find faith, and all the graces, grow, though the growth at the time might be imperceptible to yourself. He that would prove a skilful archer, must look not at the arrow, but at the mark.

Alas! I fear there is a great piece of pride and unbelief still sticking in the hearts of most unbelievers. Few seem to realize how much they need a Saviour. Few seem to understand how thoroughly they are indebted to Him. Few seem to comprehend how much they need Him every day. Few seem to feel how simply and like a child they ought to hang their souls on Him. Few seem to be aware how full of love He is to His poor, weak people, and how ready to help them! And few therefore seem to know that peace and joy which is to be had in Christ.

Change your plan, dear believing reader, if your conscience tells you you are guilty,—change your plan, and learn to trust Christ more. Physicians love to see patients coming to consult them: it is their office to receive the sickly, and if possible to effect cures. The advocate loves to be employed: it is his calling. The husband loves his wife to trust him and lean upon him: it is his delight to cherish her, and promote her

comfort. And Christ loves His people to lean on Him, to rest in Him, to call on Him, to abide in Him.

Believing reader, do so more and more. Live on Christ. Live in Christ. Live with Christ. Live to Christ. So doing you will prove that you fully realize that "Christ is all."

Reader, I conclude this subject with words once preached before the English House of Commons, which I commend to your serious attention :—

"A man may want liberty, and yet be happy, as Joseph was. A man may want peace, and yet be happy, as David was. A man may want children, and yet be blessed, as Job was. A man may want plenty, and yet be full of comfort, as Micaiah was. But he that wants the Gospel, wants everything that should do him good. A throne without the Gospel is but the devil's dungeon. Wealth without the Gospel is fuel for hell. Advancement without the Gospel is but a going high to have the greater fall.

"Christ is all in all, and where He is wanting there can be no good. Hunger cannot truly be satisfied without manna,—the bread of life, which is Jesus Christ ;—and what shall a hungry man do without bread ? Thirst cannot be quenched without that water or living spring, which is Jesus Christ ;—and what shall a thirsty soul do without water ? A captive, as we are all, cannot be delivered without redemption, which is Jesus Christ ;—and what shall the prisoner do without redemption ? Fools, as we all are, cannot be instructed without wisdom, which is Jesus Christ ;—without Him we perish in our folly. All building without Him is on sand,

which will surely fall. All working without Him is in the fire, where it will be consumed. All riches without Him have wings, and will fly away. A dungeon with Christ is a throne, and a throne without Christ a hell. All mercies without Christ are bitter, and every cup is sweet that is seasoned with a drop of His blood.

“He is the way : men without Him are Cains,—wanderers, vagabonds. He is the truth : men without Him are liars, like the devil of old. He is the life : men without Him are dead in trespasses and sin. He is the light : men without Him are in darkness, and go they know not whither. He is the vine : men that are not in Him are withered branches, prepared for the fire. He is the rock : men not built on Him are carried away with a flood. He is the Alpha and Omega, the first and last,—the author and the ender,—the founder and the finisher of our salvation. He that hath not Him, hath neither beginning of good, nor shall have end of misery. Oh ! blessed Jesus ! how much better were it not to be, than to be without thee !—never to be born, than not to die in thee ! A thousand hells come short of this, eternally to want Jesus Christ.” (*Owen's Works. Vol. viii. p. 36. Johnston's Edition.*)

Reader, may you and I be able to say amen to the spirit of this passage, and then it will be well with our souls.

I remain,

Your affectionate Friend,

J. C. RYLE.

“ Watch ! ”

MATT. XXV. 1—13.

“Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.

“And five of them were wise, and five were foolish.

“They that were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them :

“But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.

“While the bridegroom tarried they all slumbered and slept.

“And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh : go ye out to meet him.

“Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps.

“And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out.

“But the wise answered, Not so ; lest there be not enough for us and you : but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves,

“And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came ; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage ; and the door was shut.

"Afterwards came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us.

"But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you I know you not.

"Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh."

READER,

I have something to say to you about the verses before your eyes. If you do not know them it is high time that you should. If you do know them, it will not hurt you to know them better. They concern us all, whether ministers or people, rich or poor, learned or unlearned, old or young. They concern all who profess and call themselves Christians. They can never be known too well.

These verses make up one of the most solemn parables that our Lord Christ ever spoke; partly because of the time at which it was spoken; partly because of the matter which it contains.

As to the time, it was but a few days before our Lord's crucifixion. It was spoken within view of Gethsemane and Calvary, of the cross and the grave.

As to the matter, it stands as a beacon to the church of Christ in all ages. It is a witness against carelessness and slothfulness,—against apathy and indifference about religion,—and a witness of no uncertain sound. It cries to thoughtless sinners, "Awake!" It cries to true servants of Christ, "Watch!"

There are many trains of thought which this parable

opens up that I must of necessity leave alone. I have neither time nor space to follow them out. I do not sit down to compose a learned commentary, but to write a simple plain tract. I shall only clear my way by explaining two things, which otherwise might not be understood. And when I have done that, I shall keep to those main truths, which it is most useful for you and me to know.

The marriage customs of the country where the parable was spoken, call for a few words of explanation. Marriages there generally took place in the evening. The bridegroom and his friends came in procession to the bride's house after night-fall. The young women, who were the bride's friends, were all assembled there, waiting for him. As soon as the lamps and torches carried by the bridegroom's party were seen coming in the distance, these young women lighted their lamps, and went forth to meet him. Then having formed one united party, they all returned together to the bride's home. As soon as they arrived there they entered in, the doors were shut, the marriage ceremony went forward, and no one else was admitted. All these were familiar things to those who heard the Lord Jesus speak, and it is right and proper that you should have them in your mind's eye while you read this parable.

The figures and emblems used in the parable also call for some explanation. I will give you my own view of their meaning. I may be wrong. I freely admit that they are not always interpreted exactly in the same way. But you have a right to have my opinion, and I will give it you shortly and decidedly.

I believe the parable to be a prophecy all the way through.

I believe the time spoken of in the parable is the time when Christ shall return in person to this world, and a time yet to come. The very first word, the word "then," compared with the end of the twenty-fourth chapter, appears to me to settle that question.

I believe the ten virgins carrying lamps represent the whole body of professing Christians,—the visible church of Christ.

I believe the bridegroom represents our Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

I take the wise virgins to be the true believers, the real disciples of Christ, the converted part of the visible church.

I take the foolish to be the mere nominal Christians, the unconverted, the whole company of those who have no vital godliness.

I take the lamps which all alike carried, to be that mere outward profession of Christianity, which every one possesses who has been baptized, and never formally renounced his baptism.

I take the oil which some virgins had with their lamps, and others had not, to be the grace of the Holy Ghost,—that unction of the Holy One, which is the mark of all true Christians.

I consider the coming of the bridegroom to mean the second coming or advent of the Lord Christ, when He shall return in the clouds with glory.

I consider the going in to the marriage of the wise virgins, to mean the believer's entrance into his full reward in the day of Christ's appearing.

I consider the shutting out of the foolish virgins, to

mean the exclusion from Christ's kingdom and glory of every soul whom He shall find unconverted.

I offer these short explanations to your attention. I am not going to enter into any unprofitable discussion about them. And without saying another word in the way of preface, I will at once go on to point out the great practical lessons which the parable of the ten virgins is meant to teach us.

I. Learn, first of all, that the visible church of Christ will always be a mixed body till Christ comes again.

II. Learn, secondly, that the visible church is always in danger of neglecting the doctrine of Christ's second advent.

III. Learn, thirdly, that whenever Christ does come again, it will be a very sudden event.

IV. Learn, fourthly, that Christ's second advent will make an immense change to all the members of the visible church, both good and bad.

Reader, let me try to set each of these four truths plainly before you. If I can bring you, by God's help, to see their vast importance, I believe I shall have done your soul an essential service.

I. Learn, first of all, that *the visible Church of Christ will always be a mixed body, till Christ comes again.*

I can gather no other meaning from the beginning of the parable we are now considering. I there see wise and foolish virgins mingled together in one company,—virgins with oil, and virgins with no oil, all side by

side. And I see this state of things going on till the very moment the bridegroom appears. I see all this, and I cannot avoid the conclusion that the visible church will always be a mixed body, till Jesus comes again. Its members will never be all unbelievers : Christ will always have His witnesses. Its members will never be all believers : there will always be a vast proportion of formality, unbelief, hypocrisy, and false profession.

I frankly say that I can find no standing ground for the common opinion, that the visible church will gradually advance to a state of perfection,—that it will become better and better, holier and holier, up to the very end,—and that little by little the whole body shall become full of light. I see no warrant of Scripture for believing that sin will gradually dwindle away in the earth, consume, melt, and disappear by inches, like the last snow-drift in spring. Nor yet do I see warrant for believing that holiness will gradually increase, like the banyan tree of the East, until it blossoms, blooms, and fills the face of the world with fruit. I know that thousands think in this way. All I say is, that I cannot see it in God's word.

I fully admit that the Gospel appears sometimes to make rapid progress in some countries ; but that it ever does more than call out an elect people, I utterly deny. It never did more in the days of the Apostles. Out of all the cities that Paul visited, there is not the slightest proof that in any one the whole population became believers. It never has done more in any country, from the time of the Apostle down to the present day. There never yet was a parish or congregation in any part

of the world,—however favoured in the ministry it enjoyed,—there never was one, I believe, in which all the people were converted. At all events I never read or heard of it, and my belief is the thing never has been, and never will. I believe that now is the time of *election*, not of universal conversion. Now is the time for the *gathering out* of Christ's little flock. The time of general obedience is yet to come.

I fully admit that missions are doing a great work among the heathen, and that preaching, schools, and district-visiting are rescuing thousands from the devil at home. I do not undervalue these things. I would to God that all professing Christians would value them more. But men appear to me to forget that Gospel religion is often withering in one place, while it is flourishing in another. They look at the progress of Christianity in the West of Europe. They forget how fearfully it has lost ground in the East. They point to the little flood-tide of Tinnevelly and Krishnaghur. They forget the tremendous ebb in North Africa, Egypt, and Asia Minor. And as for any signs that all the ends of the earth shall turn to the Lord, under the present order of things, there are *none*. God's work is going forward, as it always has done. The Gospel is being preached for a witness to every quarter of the globe. The elect are being brought to Christ one by one, and there is everything to encourage us to persevere. But more than this no missionary can report in any station in the world.

I long for the conversion of all mankind, as much as any one. But I believe it is utterly beyond the reach

of any instrumentality that man possesses. I quite expect that the earth will one day be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord. But I believe that day will be in an entirely new dispensation : it will not be till after the Lord's return. I would not hesitate to preach the Gospel, and offer Christ's salvation to every man and woman alive, but that there always will be a vast amount of unbelief and wickedness until the second advent, I am fully persuaded. The Gospel net may perhaps be spread far more widely than it has been hitherto, but the angels shall find abundance of bad fish in it as well as good in the last day. The Gospel labourers may possibly be multiplied a thousandfold, and I pray God it may be so ; but however faithfully they may sow, a large proportion of tares will be found growing together with the wheat, at the time of harvest.

Reader, how is it with your own soul ? Remember, that till the Lord Jesus Christ comes again, there always will be wise and foolish in the church. Now which are you ?

The wise are they who have that wisdom which the Holy Ghost alone can give. They know their own sinfulness. They know Christ as their own precious Saviour. They know how to walk and please God, and they act upon their knowledge. They look on life as a season of preparation for eternity,—not as an end, but as a way,—not as a harbour, but as a voyage,—not as a home, but as a journey,—not as their full age, but their time of school. Happy are they who know these things ! The world may despise them,—but they are the wise.

The foolish are they who are without spiritual knowledge. They neither know God, nor Christ, nor sin, nor their own hearts, nor the world, nor heaven, nor hell, nor the value of their souls as they ought. There is no folly like this. To expect wages after doing no work,—or prosperity after taking no pains,—or learning after neglecting books,—this is rank folly. But to expect heaven without faith in Christ,—or the kingdom of God without being born again, or the crown of glory without the cross and a holy walk,—all this is greater folly still, and yet more common. Alas! for the folly of the world!

Reader, till the Lord Jesus Christ comes, there always will be some who have grace, and some who have not grace, in the visible church. Now which are you? How is it with your own soul?

Some have nothing but the name of Christian: others have the reality. Some have only the outward profession of religion: others have the possession also. Some are content if they belong to the church: others are never content, unless they are also united by faith to Christ. Some are satisfied if they have only the baptism of water: others are never satisfied unless they also feel within the baptism of the Spirit, and the sprinkling of the blood of atonement. Some stop short in the form of Christianity: others never rest until they have also the substance.

Reader, the visible church of Christ is made up of these two classes. There always have been such. There always will be such until the end. There must no doubt be borderers and waverers, whom man's eye

cannot discern, though God's eye can. But gracious and graceless, wise and foolish, make up the whole visible church of Christ. You yourself are described and written down in this parable. You are either one of the wise virgins, or one of the foolish. You have either got the oil of grace, or you have got none. You are either a member of Christ, or a child of the devil. You are either travelling towards heaven, or towards hell. Never for a moment forget this. This is the point that concerns your soul. Whatever your opinion may be on other points, this is the one that you should never lose sight of. Let not the devil divert your attention from it. Say to yourself, as you read this parable, "I am spoken of here."

II. Learn, secondly, that *the visible church is always in danger of neglecting the doctrine of Christ's second advent.*

I. draw this truth from that solemn verse in the parable, "While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept." I am quite aware that many good men explain these words in a different way. But I dare not call any man master. I feel that I am set for the proclamation of that which my own conscience tells me is true, and I cannot be bound by the opinions of others. There are such things as erroneous interpretations received by tradition, as well as false doctrines received by tradition, and against both, I think, we ought to be on our guard.

I do not believe that the words, "they all slumbered and slept," mean the death of all; though many think

so. To my mind such an interpretation is contrary to plain facts. All the professing church will not be sleeping the sleep of death, when Jesus comes again. St. Paul himself says in one place, "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed;" (1 Cor. xv. 51.) and in another, "We which are alive and remain shall be caught up, to meet the Lord in the air." (1 Thess. iv. 17.) Now the interpretation of which I speak involves a most awkward contradiction to these two plain texts.

I do not believe that the words were meant to teach us that the whole professing church would get into a slumbering and sleeping state of soul; though many think so. I would not be misunderstood in saying this. I do not for a moment deny that the love of even the brightest Christians is very cold, and that neither their faith nor works are what they ought to be. All I mean to say is, that this is not the truth which appears to me to be taught here. Such a view of the text seems to me to wipe away that broad line of distinction between believers and unbelievers, which, with all the short comings of believers, undoubtedly does exist. Sleep is one of those very emblems which the Spirit has chosen to represent the state of the unconverted man. "Awake thou that sleepest," He says, "and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." (Ephes. v. 14.)

But what does the verse mean? I believe that the words "all slumbered and slept," are to be interpreted with a special regard to the great event on which the whole parable hinges, even *the second advent of Christ.*

And I believe our Lord's meaning was simply this, that during the interval between His first and second advent, the whole church, both believers and unbelievers, would get into a dull and dim-sighted state of soul about the blessed doctrine of His own personal return to earth.

And, reader, I say deliberately, that so far as my own judgment goes, there never was a saying of our Lord's more thoroughly verified by the event. I say that of all doctrines of the Gospel, the one about which Christians have become most unlike the first Christians, in their sense of its true value, is the doctrine of Christ's second advent. I am obliged to say this of all denominations of Protestants. I know not of any exception. In our view of man's corruption, of justification by faith, of our need of the sanctifying work of the Spirit, of the sufficiency of Scripture,—upon these points I believe we should find that English believers were much of one mind with believers at Corinth, Ephesus, Philippi, or Rome, in former times. But in our view of *the second advent of Christ*, I fear we should find there was a mighty difference between us and them, if our experience could be compared. I am afraid we should find that we fall woefully short of them in our estimate of its importance; that in our system of doctrine it is a star of the fifteenth magnitude, while in their's it was one of the first. In one word, we should discover that compared to them in this matter, *we slumber and sleep*.

I must speak my mind on this subject, now that I am upon it. I do so most unwillingly. I do so at the

risk of giving offence, and of rubbing against the prejudices of many whom I love. But it is a cross I feel it a duty to take up. And speak I must.

I submit then that in the matter of Christ's second coming and kingdom, the church of Christ has not dealt fairly with the prophecies of the Old Testament. We have gone on far too long refusing to see that there are two personal advents of Christ spoken of in those prophecies,—an advent in humiliation,—and an advent in glory,—an advent to suffer, and an advent to reign,—a personal advent to carry the cross, and a personal advent to wear the crown. We have been slow of heart to believe ALL that the Prophets have written. The Apostles went into one extreme: they stumbled at Christ's sufferings. We have gone into the other extreme: we have stumbled at Christ's glory. We have got into a confused habit of speaking of the kingdom of Christ *as already set up amongst us*, and have shut our eyes to the fact that the devil is still prince of this world, and served by the vast majority; and that our Lord, like David in Adullam, though anointed, is not yet set upon His throne. We have got into a vicious habit of taking all the promises spiritually, and all the denunciations and threats literally. The denunciations against Babylon, and Nineveh, and Edom, and Tyre, and Egypt, and the rebellious Jews, we have been content to take *literally*, and hand over to our neighbours. The blessings and promises of glory to Zion, Jerusalem, Jacob, and Israel, we have taken *spiritually*, and comfortably applied them to ourselves and the church of Christ. To bring forward proofs

of this would be waste of time. No man can hear many sermons, and read many commentaries, without being aware that it is a fact.

Now I believe this to have been an unfair system of interpreting Scripture. I believe that the first and primary sense of every Old Testament promise as well as threat is the *literal* one,—and that Jacob means Jacob, Jerusalem means Jerusalem, Zion means Zion, and Israel means Israel, as much as Egypt means Egypt, and Babylon means Babylon. That primary sense, I believe, we have sadly lost sight of. We have adapted and accommodated to the church of Christ the promises that were spoken by God to Israel and Zion. I do not mean to say that this accommodation is in no sense allowable. But I do mean to say that the primary sense of every prophecy and promise in Old Testament prophecy was intended to have a literal fulfilment, and that this literal fulfilment has been far too much put aside and thrust into a corner. And by so doing, I think we have exactly fulfilled our Lord's words in the parable of the ten virgins,—we have proved that we are *slumbering and sleeping* about the second advent of Christ.

But I submit further, that in the interpretation of the New Testament, the church of Christ has dealt almost as unfairly with our Lord's second advent, as it has done in the interpretation of the Old. Men have got into a habit of putting a strange sense upon many of those passages which speak of the coming of the Son of Man, or of the Lord's appearing. And this habit has been far too readily submitted to. Some tell

us that the coming of the Son of Man often means death. No one can read the thousands of epitaphs in churchyards, in which some text about the coming of Christ is thrust in, and not perceive how wide-spread this view is. Some tell us that our Lord's coming means the destruction of Jerusalem. This is a very common way of interpreting the expression. Many find Jerusalem everywhere in New Testament prophecies, and like Aaron's rod, they make it swallow up everything else. Some tell us that our Lord's coming means the general judgment, and the end of all things. This is their one answer to all inquiries about things to come.

Now I believe that all these interpretations are entirely beside the mark. I have not the least desire to underrate the importance of such subjects as death and judgment. I willingly concede that the destruction of Jerusalem is typical of many things connected with our Lord's second advent, and is spoken of in chapters where that mighty event is foretold. But I must express my own firm belief that the coming of Christ is one distinct thing, and that death, judgment, and the destruction of Jerusalem, are three other distinct things. And the wide acceptance which these strange interpretations have met with, I hold to be one more proof that in the matter of Christ's second advent, the church has long *slumbered and slept*.

The plain truth of Scripture I believe to be as follows. When the number of the elect is accomplished, Christ shall come again to this world with power and great glory. He shall raise His saints, and gather them to

Himself. He shall punish with fearful judgments all who are found His enemies, and reward with glorious rewards all His believing people. He shall take to Himself His great power, and reign and establish an universal kingdom. He shall gather the scattered tribes of Israel, and place them once more in their own land. As He came the first time in person, so He shall come the second time in person. As He went away from earth visibly, so He shall return visibly. As He literally rode upon an ass,—was literally sold for thirty pieces of silver,—had His hands and feet literally pierced,—was numbered literally with the transgressors, and had lots literally cast upon His raiment,—and all that Scripture might be fulfilled,—so also shall He literally come, literally set up a kingdom, and literally reign over the earth, because the very same Scripture has said that it shall be.

The words of the angels in the first of Acts are plain and unmistakeable : “This same Jesus which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.” (Acts i. 11.) So also the words of the Apostle Peter : “The times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord : and he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you ; whom the heavens must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.” (Acts iii. 19—21.) So also the words of the Psalmist : “When the Lord shall build up Zion he shall appear in his glory.” (Psalm cii. 16.) So also the words of Zechariah : “The Lord my God shall come, and all

the saints with thee." (Zech. xiv. 5.) So also the words of Isaiah: "The Lord of hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before his ancients gloriously." (Isaiah xxiv. 23.) So also the words of Jeremiah: "I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel and Judah, saith the Lord, and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it." "I will bring again the captivity of Jacob's tents, and have mercy on his dwelling-place, and the city shall be built on her own heap." (Jer. xxx. 3, 18.) So also the words of Daniel: "Behold one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, shall serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed." (Dan. vii. 13, 14.) All these texts are to my mind plain prophecies of Christ's second coming and kingdom. All are yet without their accomplishment, and all shall yet be literally and exactly fulfilled.

I say "literally and exactly fulfilled," and I say so advisedly. From the first day that I began to read the Bible with my heart, I have never been able to see these texts, and hundreds like them in any other light. It always seemed to me that as we take literally the texts foretelling that the walls of Babylon shall be *cast down*, so we ought to take literally the texts foretelling that the walls of Zion shall be *built up*,—that as according to prophecy the Jews were *literally scattered*, so according

to prophecy the Jews will be *literally gathered*,—and that as the least and minutest predictions were made good on the subject of our Lord's coming to suffer, so the minutest predictions shall be made good which describe our Lord's coming to reign. And I have long felt it is one of the greatest short-comings of the church of Christ, that we ministers do not preach enough about this advent of Christ, and that private believers do not think enough about it. A few of us here and there receive the doctrine, and profess to love it, but the number of such persons is comparatively very small. And after all, we none of us live on it, feed on it, act on it, work from it, take comfort in it, as much as God intended us to do. In short, the bridegroom tarries, and we all *slumber and sleep!*

It proves nothing against the doctrine of Christ's second coming and kingdom, that it has sometimes been fearfully abused. I should like to know what doctrine of the Gospel has not been abused. Salvation by grace has been made a pretext for licentiousness,—election an excuse for all manner of unclean living,—and justification by faith a warrant for antinomianism. But if men will draw wrong conclusions, we are not therefore obliged to throw aside good principles. We do not give up the Gospel because of the outrageous conduct of the Anabaptists of Munster, or the extravagant assertions of Saltmarsh and William Huntington, or the strange proceedings of Jumpers and Shakers. And where is the fairness of telling us that we ought to reject the second advent of Christ, because there were Fifth Monarchy Men in the days of the Commonwealth, and

Irvingites and Millerites in our own time? Alas! men must be hard pressed for an argument, when they have no better reasons than this!

It proves nothing against the second advent of Christ, that those who hold the doctrine differ among themselves on many particular points in prophecy. Such differences need never stumble any one who recollects that unity on great points is perfectly consistent with disagreement on small ones. Luther and Zuinglius differed widely in their views of the Lord's Supper:—yet who would think of saying that therefore Protestantism is all false? Fletcher and Toplady were both clergymen in the Church of England, but differed widely about Calvinism:—yet where would be the sense of saying that all Evangelical religion was therefore untrue? In common fairness this ought to be remembered when people talk of the differences among those who study prophecy. It is possible for men to differ much as to the meaning they place on the symbols in the book of Revelation, and yet on the matter of Christ's coming and kingdom they may be entirely and substantially agreed.

It proves nothing against the doctrine that it is encompassed with many difficulties. This I fully concede. The order of events connected with our Lord's coming, and the manner of His kingdom when it is set up, are both deep subjects, and hard to be understood. But I firmly believe that the difficulties connected with any other system of interpreting unfulfilled prophecy are just twice as many as those which are said to stand in our way. I believe too that the

difficulties connected with our Lord's second coming are not half so many as those connected with His first, and that it was a far more improbable thing, "*à priori*," that the Son of God should come to *suffer*, than it is that He should come to *reign*. And after all what have we to do with the "how" and "in what manner" prophecies are to be fulfilled? Is our miserable understanding of what is possible, to be the measure and limit of God's dealings? The only question we have to do with is, "Has God said a thing?" If He has, we ought not to doubt it shall be done.

For myself I can only give my own individual testimony; but the little I know experimentally of the doctrine of Christ's second coming, makes me regard it as most practical and precious, and makes me long to see it more generally received.

I find it a powerful spring and stimulus to holy living;—a motive for patience, for moderation, for spiritual-mindedness,—a test for the employment of time,—and a gauge for all my actions,—“Should I like my Lord to find me in this place,—should I like Him to find me so doing?”

I find it the strongest argument for missionary work. The time is short. The Lord is at hand. The gathering out from all nations will soon be accomplished. The heralds and forerunners of the King will soon have proclaimed the Gospel in every nation. The night is far spent. The King will soon be here.

I find it the best answer to the infidel. He sneers at our churches and chapels, at our sermons and services, at our tracts and our schools. He points to the

millions, who care nothing for Christianity, after 1800 years of preaching. He asks me how I can account for it, if Christianity be true? I answer, It was never said that all the world would believe and serve Christ under the present dispensation. I tell him the state of things he ridicules was actually foreseen, and the number of true Christians, it was predicted, would be few. But I tell him that Christ's kingdom is yet to come, and that though we see not yet all things put under Him, they will be so one day.

I find it the best argument with the Jew. If I do not take all the prophecy of Isaiah literally, I know not how I can persuade him that the fifty-third chapter is literally fulfilled. But if I do, I have a resting-place for my lever which I know he cannot shake. How men can expect the Jews to see a Messiah coming to suffer, in Old Testament prophecies, if they do not themselves see in them a Messiah coming to reign, is past my understanding.

And now is there any one among the readers of these pages, who cannot receive the doctrine of Christ's second advent and kingdom? I invite that man to consider the subject calmly and dispassionately. Dismiss from your mind traditional interpretations. Separate the doctrine from the mistakes and blunders of many who hold it. Do not reject the foundation because of the wood, hay, and stubble which some have built upon it. Do not condemn it and cast it aside because of injudicious friends. Only examine the texts which speak of it as calmly and fairly as you weigh texts in the Romish, Arian, or Socinian con-

troversies, and I am hopeful as to the result on your mind. Alas! if texts of Scripture were always treated as uncereemoniously as I have known texts to be treated by those who dislike the doctrine of Christ's second advent, I should indeed tremble for the cause of truth.

Is there any one among the readers of these pages who agrees with the principles I have tried to advocate? I beseech that man to endeavour to realize the second coming of Christ more and more. Truly we feel it but little compared with what we ought to do, at the very best. Be gentle in argument with those that differ from you. Remember that a man may be mistaken on this subject, and yet be a holy child of God. It is not the slumbering on this subject that ruins souls, but the want of grace. Above all avoid dogmatism and positiveness, and specially about symbolical prophecy. It is a sad truth, but a truth never to be forgotten, that none have injured the doctrine of Christ's second coming so much as its over-zealous friends.

III. Learn in the third place, that *whenever Christ does come again, it will be a very sudden event.*

I draw that truth from the verse in the parable which says, "at midnight there was a cry made, Behold the bridegroom cometh, go ye forth to meet him."

I do not know when Christ will come again. I should think it most presumptuous if I said that I did. I am no prophet, though I love the subject of prophecy. I dislike all fixing of dates and naming of years, and I believe it has done great harm. I only assert

positively that Christ will come again one day to set up His kingdom on earth, and that whether the day be near or whether it be far off, it will take the church and world exceedingly by surprise.

It will come on men suddenly. It will break on the world all at once. It will not have been talked over, prepared for, and looked forward to by everybody. It will awaken men's minds like the cry of "fire" at midnight. It will startle men's hearts like a trumpet blown at their bedside in their first sleep. Like Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea, they will know nothing till the very waters are upon them. Like Dathan and Abiram and their company, when the earth opened under them, the moment of their hearing the report of the visitation will be the same moment when they will see it with their eyes. Before they can recover their breath and know where they are, they shall find that the Lord is come.

I suspect there is a vague notion floating in men's minds, that the present order of things will not end quite so suddenly. I suspect men cling to the idea, that there will be a kind of Saturday night in the world, a time when all will know the day of the Lord is near—a time when all will be able to cleanse their consciences, look out their wedding garments, shake off their earthly business, and prepare to meet their God. If any reader of these pages has got such a notion into his head, I charge him to give it up for ever. If anything is clear in unfulfilled prophecy, this one fact seems clear, that the Lord's coming will be sudden, and take men by surprise. And any view

of prophecy which destroys the possibility of its being sudden,—whether by interposing a vast number of events as yet to happen, or by placing the millennium between ourselves and the advent,—any such view appears to my mind to carry with it a fatal defect. Everything which is written in Scripture on this point confirms the truth that Christ's second coming will be sudden. "As a snare shall it come," says one place.—"As a thief in the night," says another.—"As the lightning," says a third.—"In such an hour as ye think not," says a fourth.—"When they shall say, peace and safety," says a fifth. (Luke xxi. 35. 1 Thess. v. 2. Luke xvii. 24. Matt. xxiv. 44. 1 Thess. v. 2.)

Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself uses two most striking comparisons when dwelling on this subject. Both are most teaching, and both ought to raise in us solemn thoughts. In one He compares His coming to the days of Lot. In the days when Lot fled from Sodom, the men of Sodom were buying and selling, eating and drinking, planting and building. They thought of nothing but earthly things : they were entirely absorbed in them. They despised Lot's warning. They mocked at his counsel. The sun rose on the earth as usual. All things were going on as they had done for hundreds of years. They saw no sign of danger. But now mark what our Lord says, "The same day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed." (Luke xvii. 28—30.)

In the other passage I allude to, our Lord compares His coming to the days of Noah. Do you remember

how it was in Noah's day? Stay a little, and let me remind you. When the flood came on the earth in Noah's time, there was no appearance beforehand of anything so awful being near. The days and nights were following each other in regular succession. The grass, and trees, and crops were growing as usual. The business of the world was going on. And though Noah preached continually of coming danger, and warned men to repent, no one believed what he said. But at last one day the rain begun and did not cease: the waters rose and did not stop: the flood came, and swelled, and went on, and covered one thing after another, and all were drowned who were not in the ark. Now mark what our Lord says, "As it was in the days of Noe, so shall it also be in the days of the Son of Man: they did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all." (Luke xvii. 26, 27.) The flood took the world by surprise,—so also will the coming of the Son of Man. In the midst of the world's business, when everything is going on just as usual,—in such an hour as this the Lord Jesus Christ will return.

Reader, the suddenness of the Lord's second advent is a truth that should lead every professing Christian to great searchings of heart. It should lead him to serious thought, both about himself and about the world.

Think for a moment how little the world is prepared for such an event. Look at the towns and cities of the

earth, and think of them. Mark how most men are entirely absorbed in the things of time, and utterly engrossed with the business of their callings. Banks, counting-houses, shops, politics, law, medicine, commerce, railways, banquets, balls, theatres,—each and all are drinking up the hearts and souls of thousands, and thrusting out the things of God. Think what a fearful shock the sudden stoppage of all these things would be, the sudden stoppage which will be in the day of Christ's appearing. If only one great house of business stops payment now, it makes a great sensation. What then shall be the crash when the whole machine of worldly affairs shall stand still at once? From money-counting and earthly scheming, from racing after riches and wrangling about trifles, to be hurried away to meet the King of kings, how tremendous the change! From dancing and dressing, from opera-going and novel-reading, to be summoned away by the voice of the archangel and the trump of God, how awful the transition! Yet remember, all this shall one day be.

Look at the rural parishes of such a land as ours, and think of them. See how the minds of the vast majority of their inhabitants are buried in farms and allotments, in cattle and corn, in rent and wages, in rates and tithes, in digging and sowing, in buying and selling, in planting and building. See how many there are who evidently care for nothing, and feel nothing, excepting the things of this world; who reckon nothing whether their minister preaches law or Gospel, Christ or anti-christ, and would be utterly unconcerned if the Archbishop of

Canterbury was turned out of Lambeth Palace, and the Pope of Rome put in his place. See how many there are of whom it can only be said that their belly and their pockets are their gods. And then fancy the awful effect of a sudden call to meet the Lord Christ,—a call to a day of reckoning, in which the price of wheat and the rate of wages shall be nothing, and the Bible shall be the only rule of trial! And yet remember, all this shall one day be.

Reader, picture these things to your mind's eye. Picture your own house, your own family, your own fireside. What will be found there? Picture above all, your own feelings, your own state of mind. And then remember, that this is the end towards which the world is hastening. There will be no long notice to quit. This is the way in which the world's affairs will be wound up. This is an event which may possibly happen in your own time. And surely you cannot avoid the conclusion that the second coming of Christ is no mere curious speculation. It is an event of vast practical importance to your own soul.

"Ah!" I can imagine some reader saying, "This is all foolishness, raving, and nonsense; the man is beside himself. This is all extravagant fanaticism. Where is the likelihood, where is the probability of all this? The world is going on as it always did. The world will last my time." Do not say so. Do not drive away the subject by such language as this. This is the way that men talked in the days of Noah and Lot; but what happened? They found to their cost that Noah and Lot

were right. Do not say so. The Apostle Peter foretold eighteen hundred years ago that men would talk in this way. "There shall come in the last days scoffers," he tells us, "saying, where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." (2 Pet. iii. 34.) Oh! do not fulfil his prophecy by your unbelief.

Where is the raving and fanaticism of the things which I have been saying? Show it to me if you can. I calmly assert that the present order of things will come to an end one day. Will any one deny that? Will any one tell me we are to go on as we do now for ever? I calmly say that Christ's second coming will be the end of the present order of things. I have said so because the Bible says it. I have calmly said that Christ's second coming will be a sudden event, whenever it may be, and may possibly be in our own time. I have said so, because thus and thus I find it written in the word of God. If you do not like it, I am sorry for it. One thing only you must remember,—you are finding fault with the Bible, not with me.

IV. Learn in the last place, that *Christ's second coming will make an immense change to all members of the visible church, both good and bad.*

I draw this truth from the concluding portion of the parable,—from the discovery of the foolish virgins that their lamps were gone out,—from their anxious address to the wise, "give us of your oil,"—from their vain

knocking at the door when too late, crying, "Lord, Lord, open to us,"—from the happy admission of the wise who were found ready, in company with the bridegroom. Each and all of these points are full of food for thought. But I have neither time nor space to dwell upon them particularly. I can only take one single broad view of all. To all who have been baptized in the name of Christ,—converted or unconverted,—believers or unbelievers,—holy or unholy,—godly or ungodly,—wise or foolish,—gracious or graceless,—to all the second advent of Christ shall be an immense change.

It shall be an *immense change to the ungodly*,—to all who are found mere nominal Christians,—a change both in their opinions and position.

All such persons, when Christ comes again, shall see the value of real spiritual religion, if they never saw it before. They will do in effect what the parable describes under a figure,—they will cry to the godly, "Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out."

Who does not know, that as things are now, spiritual religion never brings a man the world's praise? It never has done, and it never does at this day. It entails on a man the world's disapprobation,—the world's persecution,—the world's mockery,—the world's opposition,—the world's ridicule,—the world's sneers. The world will let a man serve the devil and go to hell quietly, and no one lifts a little finger to stop him, or says, "Be merciful to your soul." The world will never let a man serve Christ and go to heaven quietly;

everybody cries, "Hold hard," and does everything that can be done to keep him back.

Who has not heard of nicknames in plenty bestowed on those who follow Christ and try to be saved;—Pietists, Puritans, Methodists, Fanatics, Enthusiasts, Calvinists, Ultra-religionists, the Saints, the Righteous-overmuch, the Very Good People, and many more? Who does not know the petty family persecutions which often go on in private society in our day? Let a young person go to every ball, and opera, and race-course, and worldly party, and utterly neglect his soul, and no one interferes,—no one says, "Spare thyself,"—no one says, "Take care, remember God, judgment and eternity." But let him only begin to read his Bible, and be diligent in prayer,—let him decline worldly amusement, and become particular in his employment of time,—let him seek an evangelical ministry, and live like an immortal being;—let him do this, I say, and all his friends and relations will probably be up in arms. "You are going too far. You need not be so very good. You are taking up extreme views." This, in all probability, is the very least that such a person will hear. If a young woman, she will be marked and avoided by all her equals. If a young man, he will be set down by all who knew him, as weak, silly, and precise. In short, such a person will soon discover that there is no help from the world in the way to heaven, but plenty of help in the way to hell.

Alas! that it should be so. But so it is. These are ancient things. As it was in the days of Cain and Abel,

—as it was in the days of Isaac and Ishmael, even so it is now. They that are born after the flesh will persecute those that are born after the Spirit. The cross of Christ will always bring reproach with it. As the Jews hated Christ, so the world hates Christians. As the head was bruised, so also the members will be. As contempt was poured on the Master, so it will be also on the disciple. In short, if a man will become a decided evangelical Christian, in the present order of things, he must count the cost, and make up his mind to lose the world's favour. In a word, he must be content to be thought by many little better than a fool.

Reader, there will be an end of all this when Christ returns to this world. The light of that day will at length shew everything in its true colours. The scales will fall from the poor worldling's eyes. The value of the soul will flash on his astonished mind. The utter uselessness of a mere nominal Christianity will burst upon him like a thunder storm. The blessedness of regeneration and faith in Christ, and a holy walk, will shine before him like "Mene, Mene, Tekel, Peres," on the wall of the Babylonian palace. The veil will fall from his face. He will discover that the godly have been the wise, and that he has played the fool exceedingly. And just as Saul wanted Samuel when it was too late, and Belshazzar sent for Daniel when the kingdom was deserting from him, so will the ungodly turn to the very men they once mocked and despised, and cry to them, "Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out."

But as there will be a complete change in the *feelings* of the ungodly in the day of Christ's second advent, so will there also be a complete change in their *position*. Hope, the plank to which they now cling, and on which they generally depend to the very last, hope will be entirely taken away in that awful day. They will seek salvation with earnestness, but not be able to find it. They will run hither and thither in a vain search for the oil of grace. They will knock loudly at the door of mercy, and get no answer. They will cry, "Lord, Lord, open to us," but all to no purpose. They will discover to their sorrow that opportunities once let slip can never be regained, and that the notion of universal mercy always to be obtained, is a mere delusion of the devil.

Who does not know that thousands are urged to pray and repent now, who never attempt it? They mean to try one day perhaps. Like Felix, they hope for a convenient season. They fancy it will never be too late to seek the Lord. But there is a time coming when prayer shall be heard no longer, and repentance shall be unavailing. There is a time when the door by which Manasseh, and Saul the persecutor entered, shall be shut and opened no more. There is a time when the fountain in which Magdalene, and John Newton, and thousands of others were washed and made clean, shall be sealed for ever. There is a time when men shall know the folly of sin, but, like Judas, too late for repentance;—when they shall desire to enter the promised land, but, like Israel at Kadesh, not be able;

—when they shall see the value of God's favour and covenant blessing, but like Esau, when they can no longer possess it;—when they shall believe every jot and tittle of God's revealed word, but like the miserable devils, only to tremble.

Yes! reader, men may come to this, and many will come to this, in the day of Christ's appearing. They will ask, and not receive. They will seek, and not find. They will knock, and the door shall not be opened to them. Alas! indeed, that so it should be. Woe to the man who puts off seeking his manna till the Lord's day of return! Like Israel of old, he will find none. Woe to the man who goes to buy oil when he ought to be burning it! Like the foolish virgins, he will find himself shut out from the marriage supper of the Lamb. Oh! that professing Christians would consider these things! Oh! that they would remember the words of our Lord have yet to be fulfilled, "When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us, and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are: then shall ye begin to say, we have eaten and drank in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets: but he shall say, I tell you I know you not whence ye are; depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity." (Luke xiii. 25—27.)

But as Christ's second coming will be a mighty change to the ungodly, so will it also be a *mighty change to the godly*.

They shall at length be freed from everything which now mars their comfort. "The door shall be shut." Against the fiery darts of Satan,—against the loathsome weakness of the flesh which now clings to them,—against the unkind world which now misrepresents and misunderstands them,—against the doubts and fears which now so often darken their path,—against the weariness which now clogs their best efforts to serve the Lord,—against coldness and deadness,—against shortcomings and backslidings,—against all these the door shall be shut for ever. Not one single Canaanite shall be found in the land. They shall no longer be vexed by temptation, persecuted by the world, warred against by the devil. Their conflict shall all be over. Their strife with the flesh shall for ever cease. The armour of God, which they have so long worn, shall at length be laid aside. They shall be where there is no Satan, no world, and no sin. Ah! reader, the second Eden shall be far better than the first. In the first Eden the door was not shut; our joy was but for a moment. But, blessed be God, in the second Eden, the Lord shall shut us in.

And as the godly shall enjoy a freedom from all evil in the day of Christ's appearing, so shall they also enjoy the presence of all good. They shall go in with the bridegroom to the marriage. They shall be for ever in the company of Christ, and go out no more. Faith shall then be swallowed up in sight. Hope shall become certainty. Knowledge shall at length be perfect. Prayer shall be turned into praise. Desires shall

receive their full accomplishment. Hunger and thirst after conformity to Christ's image, shall at length be satisfied. The thought of parting shall not spoil the pleasure of meeting. The company of saints shall be enjoyed without hurry and distraction. The family of Abraham shall no more feel temptations,—nor the family of Job afflictions,—nor the family of David household bereavements,—nor the family of Paul thorns in the flesh,—nor the family of Lazarus poverty and sores. Every tear shall be wiped away in that day. It is the time when the Lord shall say, "I make all things new."

Oh! reader, if God's children find joy and peace in believing even now, what tongue shall tell their feelings when they behold the King in His beauty? If the report of the land that is far off has been sweet to them in the wilderness, what pen shall describe their happiness, when they see it with their own eyes? If it has cheered them now and then to meet two or three like-minded in this evil world, how their hearts will burn within them, when they see a multitude that no man can number, the least defects of each purged away, and not one false brother in the list? If the narrow way has been a way of pleasantness to the scattered few who have travelled it with their poor frail bodies, how precious shall their rest seem in the day of gathering together, when they have a glorious body like their Lord's? Then shall we understand the meaning of the text, "In thy presence is fulness of joy, and at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore." (Psalm xvi. 11.)

Then shall we experience the truth of that beautiful hymn, which says,

Let me be with thee where thou art,
My Saviour, my eternal rest;
Then only shall this longing heart
Be fully and for ever blest.

Let me be with thee where thou art,
Thy unveil'd glory to behold;
Then only shall this wand'ring heart
Cease to be false to thee and cold.

Let me be with thee where thou art,
Where none can die, where none remove;
There neither death nor life shall part
Me from thy presence and thy love.

Is there a man or woman amongst the readers of these pages who ever laughs at true religion? Is there one who persecutes and ridicules vital godliness in others, and dares to talk of people being over-particular, and righteous overmuch? Oh! beware what you are doing; again I say, beware. You may live to think very differently. You may live to alter your opinion, but perhaps too late. Ah! reader, there is a day before us all when there will be no infidels. No! not one. There is a day when the disciples of Paine, and Voltaire, and Emerson, shall call on the rocks to fall on them, and on the hills to cover them. Before the throne of Jesus every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that He is Lord. Remember that day, and beware.

Is there among the readers of these pages some dear child of God, who is mocked and despised for the Gospel's sake, and feels as if he stood alone? Take comfort. Be patient. Wait a little longer. Your turn shall yet come. When the spies returned from searching Canaan, men talked of stoning Caleb and Joshua, because they brought a good report of the land. A few days passed away, and all the assembly confessed that they alone had been right. Strive to be like them. Follow the Lord fully, as they did, and sooner or later, all men shall confess that you did well. Never, never be afraid of going too far. Never, never be afraid of being too holy. Never, never be ashamed of desiring to go to heaven, and of seeking to have a great crown. Millions will lament in the day of Christ's return, because they have not got religion enough:—not one will be heard to say that he has got too much. Take comfort. Press on.

And now, reader, it only remains for me to close this subject by three words of application, which seem to me to arise naturally out of the parable of which I have been writing. I heartily pray God to bless them to your soul, and to make them words in season.

1. My first word of application shall be *a question*. I take the parable of the ten virgins as my warrant, and I address that question to every one of my readers. I ask you, "Are you ready?" Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, "They that were ready, went in with the bridegroom to the marriage,"—they that were

ready, and none else. Now here in the sight of God, I ask each and every reader, Is this your case? Are you ready?

I do not ask whether you are a churchman, and make a profession of religion.—I do not ask whether you attend an evangelical ministry, and like evangelical people, and can talk of evangelical subjects and read evangelical tracts and books. All this is the surface of Christianity. All this costs little, and may be easily attained. I want to search your heart more thoroughly, and probe your conscience more deeply. I want to know whether you have been born again, and whether you have the Holy Ghost dwelling in your soul. I want to know whether you have any oil in your vessel while you carry the lamp of profession, and whether you are ready to meet the bridegroom,—ready for Christ's return to the earth. I want to know, if the Lord should come this week, whether you could lift up your head with joy, and say, "This is our God; we have waited for him; let us be glad, and rejoice in his salvation." These things I want to know, and this is what I mean when I say, "Are you ready?"

"Ah!" I can imagine some saying, "this is asking far too much. *To be ready for Christ's appearing!* this is far too high a standard. This is extravagance. There would be no living in the world at this rate. This is a hard saying. Who can hear it? I cannot help it. I believe this is the standard of the Bible. I believe this is the standard Paul sets before us when he says the Thessalonians were "waiting for the Son of

God from heaven," and the Corinthians "waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Thess. i. 10. 1 Cor. i. 7.) This, I believe, is the standard Peter sets before us, when he speaks of "looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God." (2 Peter iii. 12.) I believe it is a mark that every true believer should be continually aiming at, to live so as to be ever ready to meet Christ. God forbid that I should place the standard of Christian practice a hair's breadth higher than the level at which the Bible places it. But God forbid that I should ever put it a hair's breadth lower. If I do, what right have I to say that the Bible is my rule of faith.

I want to disqualify no man for usefulness upon earth. I require no man to become a hermit, and cease to serve his generation. I call on no man to leave his lawful calling and neglect his earthly affairs. But I do call on every one to live like one who expects Christ to return, to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; to live like a pilgrim and a stranger, ever looking unto Jesus;—to live like a good servant, with his loins girded, and his lamp burning;—to live like one whose treasure is in heaven, with his heart packed up and ready to be gone. This is readiness. This is preparation. And is this too much to ask? I say unhesitatingly, that it is not.

Now, reader, are you ready in this way? If not, I should like to know what good your religion does you. What is it all but a burdensome form? What is it but a mere temporary cloak that will not wear beyond this

world? Truly a religion that does not make a man ready for everything,—for death,—for judgment, for the second advent, for the resurrection,—such a religion may well be looked on with suspicion. Reader, if your religion does not make you ready for anything, you may depend the sooner it is changed the better.

2. My second word of application shall be *an invitation*. I address it to every one who feels in his conscience that he has no grace in his heart,—to every one who feels that the character of the foolish virgins is his own. To every such person I give an invitation this day, in my Master's name. I invite you "to awake and flee to Christ."

Reader, if you are a man of this sort, you know that all within you is wrong in the sight of God. Nothing can be said more true about you than that you are asleep,—asleep not merely about the doctrine of Christ's second advent, but about everything that concerns your soul. You are wide awake perhaps about temporal things. You read the newspapers, it may be, and are mighty in the "Times." You have your head stored with earthly wisdom and useful knowledge. But you have no heart-felt sense of sin, no peace or friendship with God, no experimental acquaintance with Christ, no delight in the Bible and prayer. And yet you are a sinner, a dying sinner, an immortal sinner, a sinner going to meet Christ, a sinner going to be judged. What, I would put it to your conscience as an honest man, what is all this but being asleep?

How long is this to go on? When do you mean to arise and live as if you had a soul? When will you cease to hear as one who hears not? When will you give up running after shadows, and seek something substantial? When will you throw off the mockery of a religion which cannot satisfy, cannot comfort, cannot sanctify, cannot save, and will not bear a calm examination? When will you give up having a faith which does not influence your practice,—having a book which you say is God's word, but treat as if it was not,—having the name of Christian, but knowing nothing of Christ? Oh! reader, when, when shall it once be?

Why not this very year? Why not this very day? Why not at once awake and call upon your God, and resolve that you will sleep no longer? I set before you an open door. I set before you Jesus Christ the Saviour who died to make atonement for sinners,—Jesus who is able to save to the uttermost,—Jesus willing to receive. The hand that was nailed to the cross is held out to you in mercy.—The eye that wept over Jerusalem is looking on you with pity.—The voice that has said to many wanderers, "Thy sins are forgiven," is saying to you, "Come to me." Go to Jesus first and foremost, if you would know what step to take. Think not to wait for repentance, and faith, and a new heart, but go to Him just as you are. Go to Him in prayer, and cry, "Lord save me, or I perish. I am weary of sleeping; I would fain sleep no longer." Oh! awake thou that sleepest, and Christ shall give thee light.

Sun, moon, and stars are all witnessing against you; they continue according to God's ordinances, and you are ever transgressing them. The grass, the birds, the very worms of the earth, are all witnessing against you: they fill their place in creation, and you do not. Sabbath and ordinances are continually witnessing against you; they are ever proclaiming that there is a God and a judgment, and you are living as if there were none. The tears and prayers of godly relations are witnessing against you; others are sorrowfully thinking you have a soul, though you seem to forget it. The very grave stones that you see every week are witnessing against you; they are silently witnessing life is uncertain, time is short, the resurrection is yet to come,—the Lord is at hand. All, all are saying, Awake, awake, awake! Oh! reader, the time past may surely suffice you to have slept. Awake to be wise. Awake to be safe. Awake to be happy. Awake and sleep no more.

3. My last word of application shall be *an exhortation* to all true believers,—to all who have the oil of grace in their hearts, and have fled for pardon to the blood of the Lamb. I draw it from the words of the Lord Jesus at the end of the parable. I exhort you earnestly “to watch.”

I exhort you to watch against everything which might interfere with a readiness for Christ's appearing. Search your own hearts. Find out the things which most frequently interrupt your communion with Christ, and cause fogs to rise between you and the sun. Mark

these things, and know them, and against them ever watch and be on your guard.

Watch against sin of every kind and description. Think not to say of any sin whatever, "Ah! that is one of the things that I shall never do." I tell you there is no possible sin too abominable for the very best of us all to commit. Remember David and Uriah. The spirit may be sometimes very willing, but the flesh is always very weak. You are yet in the body. Watch and pray.

Watch against doubts and unbelief as to the complete acceptance of your soul, if you are a believer in Christ Jesus. The Lord Jesus finished the work He came to do:—do not tell Him that He did not. The Lord Jesus paid your debts in full:—do not tell Him that you think He left you to pay part. The Lord Jesus promises eternal life to every sinner that comes to Him:—do not tell Him, even while you are coming, that you think He lies. Alas! for our unbelief! In Christ you are like Noah in the ark, and Lot in Zoar,—nothing can harm you. The earth may be burned up with fire at the Lord's appearing, but not a hair of your head shall perish. Doubt it not. Pray for more faith. Watch and pray.

Watch against inconsistency of walk, and conformity to the world. Watch against sins of temper and of tongue. These are the kind of things that grieve the Spirit of God, and make His witness within us faint and low. Watch and pray.

Watch against the leaven of false doctrine. Remember that Satan can transform himself into an angel of light.

Remember that bad money is never marked bad, or else it would never pass. Be very jealous for the whole truth as it is in Jesus. Do not put up with a grain of error merely for the sake of a pound of truth. Do not tolerate a little false doctrine one bit more than you would a little sin. Oh! reader, remember this caution. Watch and pray.

Watch against slothfulness about the Bible and private prayer. There is nothing so spiritual but we may at last do it formally. Most backslidings begin in the closet. When a tree is snapped in two by a high wind, we generally find there had been some long hidden decay. Oh! watch and pray.

Watch against bitterness and uncharitableness towards others. A little love is more valuable than many gifts. Be eagle-eyed in seeing the good that is in your brethren, and dim-sighted as the mole about the evil. Let your memory be a strong box for their graces, but a sieve for their faults. Watch and pray.

Watch against pride and self-conceit. Peter said at first, "though all men deny thee, yet will not I." And presently he fell. Pride is the high road to a fall. Watch and pray.

Watch against the sins of Galatia, Ephesus, and Laodicea. Believers may run well for a season, then lose their first love, and then become luke-warm. Watch and pray.

Watch not least against the sin of Jehu. A man may have great zeal to all appearance, and yet have very bad motives. It is a much easier thing to oppose

anti-christ than to follow Christ. It is one thing to protest against error : it is quite another thing to love the truth. So watch and pray.

Oh ! my believing readers, let us all watch more than we have done. Let us watch more every year that we live. Let us watch, that we may not be startled when the Lord appears.

Let us watch *for the world's sake*. We are the books they chiefly read. They mark our ways far more than we think. Let us aim to be plainly-written epistles of Christ.

Let us watch *for our own sakes*. As our walk is, so will be our peace. As our conformity to Christ's mind, so will be our sense of Christ's atoning blood. If a man will not walk in the full light of the sun, how can he expect to be warm ?

And, above all, let us watch *for our Lord Jesus Christ's sake*. Let us live as if His glory was concerned in our behaviour. Let us live as if every slip and fall was a reflection on the honour of our King. Let us live as if every allowed sin was one more thorn in His head,—one more nail in His feet,—one more spear in His side. Oh ! let us exercise a godly jealousy over thoughts, words, and actions ;—over motives, manners, and walk. Never, never let us fear being too strict. Never, never let us think we can watch too much. Legh Richmond's dying words were very solemn. Few believers were ever more useful in their day and generation. Of few can it be said so truly,

that he "being dead yet speaketh." But what did he say to one who stood by while he lay dying?—
"BROTHER, BROTHER, WE ARE NONE OF
US MORE THAN HALF AWAKE!"

I remain,

Your affectionate Friend,

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